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LET'S PLAY

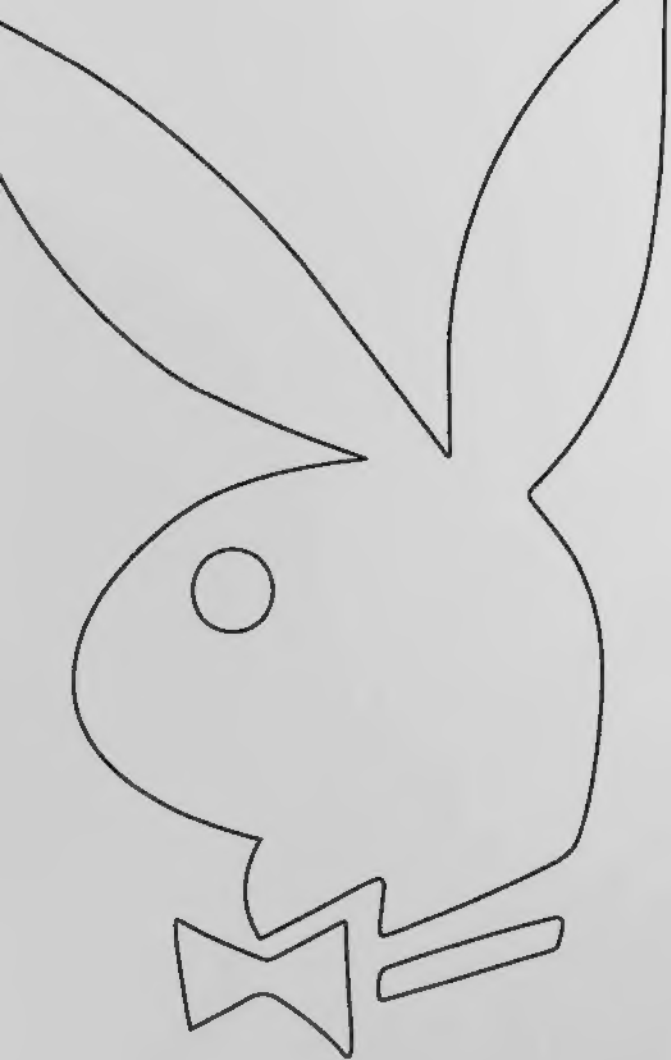
SWEDISH
POP STAR
TOVE LO

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ON THE COVER
TASHA WOOD
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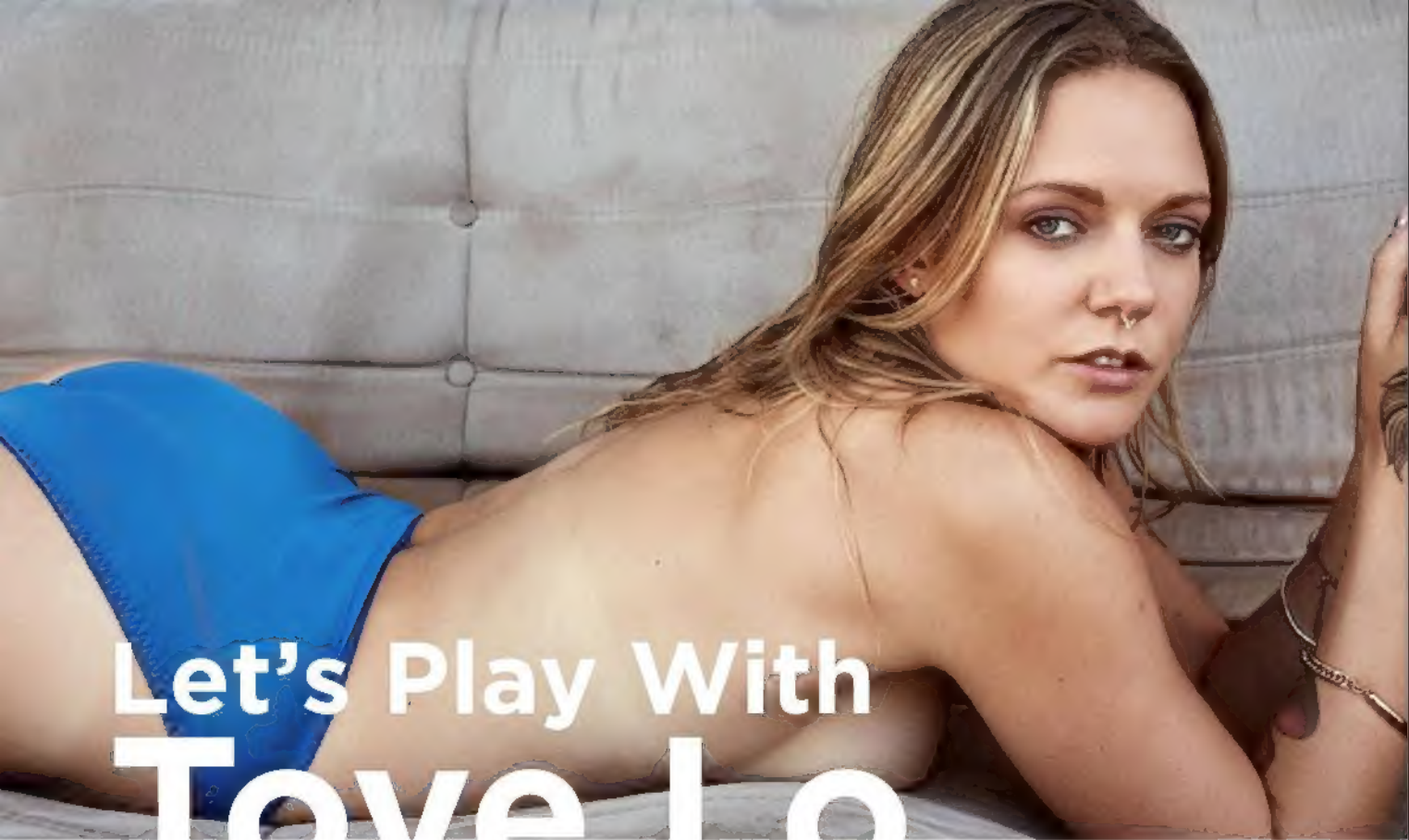
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Let's Play With Tove Lo

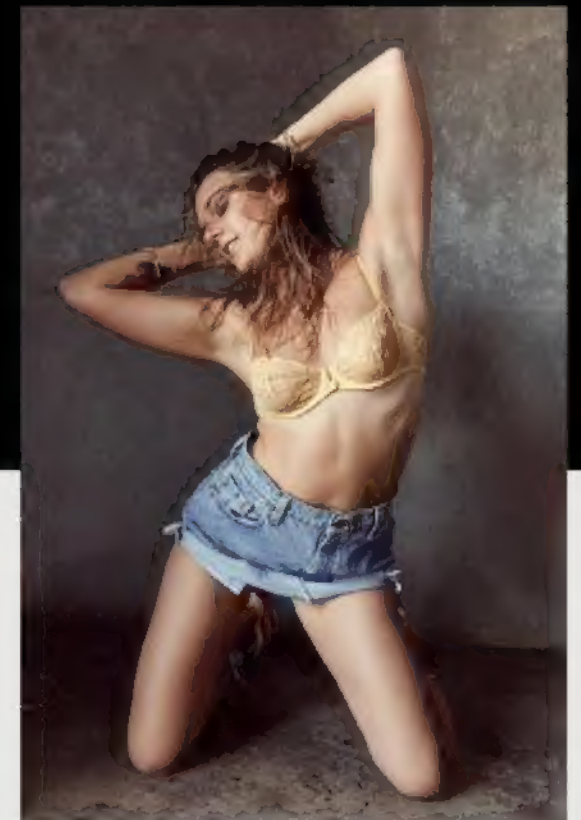
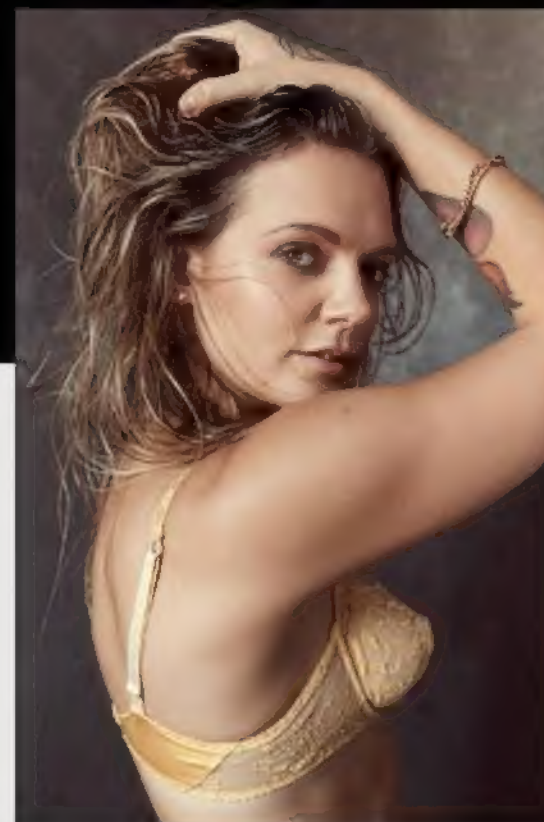
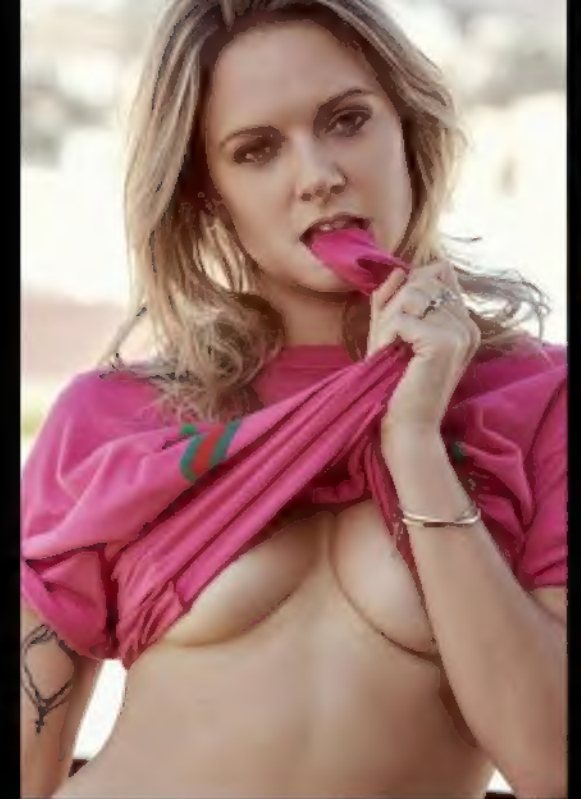
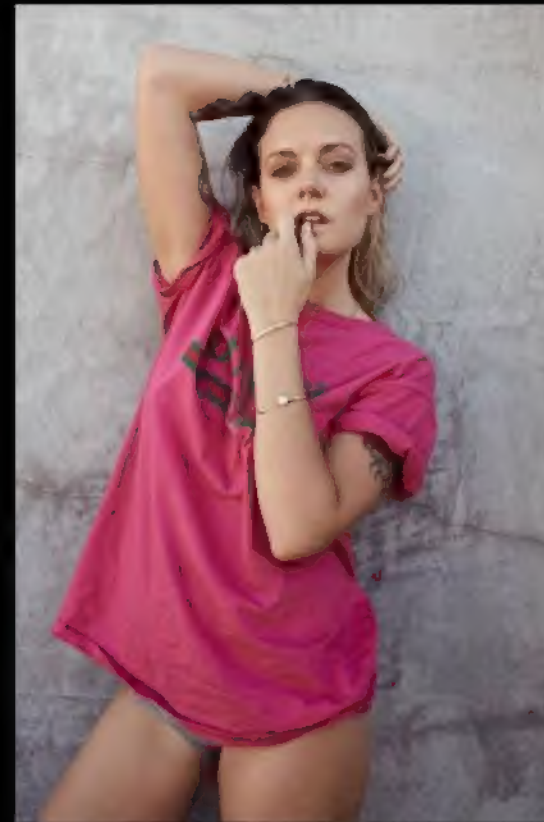
The Swedish pop star tells us all about her “Disco Tits”

BY EVE BARLOW

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FELISHA TOLENTINO

Swedish pop singer-songwriter Tove Lo is incapable of self-censorship; we've seen this since she first emerged, in 2013, with the addictive single “Habits (Stay High).” She has spent the past four years conquering ever-larger stages, often with only glitter covering her nipples, kitting out her house-infused synth pop with unfiltered lyrics about sex, drugs and hard-won self-discovery. The result: a bracing new paradigm of how women in pop can present themselves. In addition to co-writing for artists including Lorde, Nick Jonas and Ellie Goulding, Lo takes charge behind the scenes, funding her own films to accompany 2016's Lady Wood

album. That title, by the way, is a female twist on the male anatomy; her new album, *Blue Lips*, is another cheeky reversal. Both suggest insatiable appetites—a theme borne out by the new album's lead single, “Disco Tits,” whose video depicts Lo in flagrante with a yellow beugyed puppet. Therein lies a key weapon in her arsenal: “It's rare to make fun of female sexuality,” she says. “Naked dudes in movies can be sexy or funny, but not women. I like to play with that.” Having recently turned 30, with new music and a new love in the mix, Lo feels reborn. “I made it to this!” she says with a laugh. “I'm whole.”



A photograph of two elegant, tulip-shaped wine glasses filled with white wine, resting on a polished, light-colored marble surface. The glasses are positioned diagonally, with their reflections clearly visible on the glossy floor. The lighting creates soft highlights on the rim of the glasses and the surface of the wine. The overall mood is sophisticated and elegant.

With Wine, It's Always Half Full

In the second column of our new Philosophy of Pleasure series, New York Times best-selling author Mychal Denzel Smith writes on the love and compassion in a generous pour

BY MYCHAL DENZEL SMITH



Like many people who have been raised by pop culture, I've always had ideas about romance that revolve around the "grand gesture." Whether it's surprising your partner (or the person you want to be your partner) with a big-money purchase—a diamond or car or house—or risking life and limb to run through airport security to inform them you've quit your job so you can be together a thousand miles from home, the grand gesture supposedly shows great sacrifice, and we're led to believe that love is only as meaningful as the sacrifices we are willing to make for it.

Like anyone who has grown critical of the messages they have received from pop culture, I know that's all bullshit. Not because I'm a millennial who can't (and probably will never be able to) afford a diamond or car or house, but because I have lived and grown, loved and lost. I know love can't be held or nurtured by moving from grand gesture to grand gesture, constantly sacrificing without taking the time to ask what you're sacrificing toward. Love is a practice.

But what does that practice look like? That's something I'm still learning. I was in a relationship a few years ago that showed me I didn't know, and, as a result, I fucked it up in a major way (a topic for another time). I'm in a different relationship now, and I feel loved like I never have before—in ways I didn't think possible or thought myself unworthy of. Naturally, I want to reciprocate that love, and figuring out how is something that confounds me every day.

Our relationship has largely flourished during the pandemic lockdown, which has meant practically all of our time together has been spent at home, where we talk intimately, watch movies, read alongside each other, share meals and drink lots of wine.

I had a passable knowledge of wine before we started dating—enough to know I liked having a bottle of Montepulciano around and that the most perfect pairing in the world is fried chicken and sauvignon blanc. (The bright crispness of a sauvignon blanc cuts through the fatty richness of the fried chicken, and, since it's a drier white wine, you aren't completely coating your mouth from bite to sip in a way that will feel soggy and overwhelming. They are in harmonious balance.) But the world of wine is so vast and varied that it can be intimidating for the uninitiated to jump in. Most of us are going to stick with the most popular styles and probably be content with never knowing if we've picked the right vintage.

My partner will say she's not an expert, but she has definitely explored more than I have. In the days before we felt safe venturing outside of our respective apartments to see each other, she had a box of different wines delivered to me. It was sweet, and not only because I needed all the wine I could get to soothe the paranoia of living through a pandemic that was claiming more and more lives every day (and still, infuriatingly, is). It was a way to share her interest and learn her quirks by tasting and talking about the flavors she was drawn to.

Wine is already a staple of romance. It's built for it. I don't mean to suggest other alcoholic drinks aren't; you should go with whatever moves you. But wine lingers in a way beer doesn't and moves a bit slower than liquor. It stops time. You sip, you laugh, you pour a bit too much, but a good wine doesn't rush its seduction. It's meant for those moments before you gaze into each other's eyes—before the first passionate kiss and after the third, before you feel the courage to say it but know it's coming and suddenly blurt out, "I love you."

I'm still searching for the ways to practice love, fearful that I will come up short. But one thing I've learned is that I can pick out a nice wine for us to share. To pair with our roast duck dinner at Christmas, I chose a Barolo from Massolino—their 2014 vintage. (This can be confusing, but know that "vintage" isn't about the age of the wine; it means all the grapes came from that year, likely because the producer felt it was a particularly good harvest.) I almost chose a Châteauneuf-du-Pape, which has become a favorite of both of ours since it's a bold but still versatile red with the right amount of tannins without being too dry. But I prepared the duck with rum glaze, which meant it was going to be on the sweet side, and the Barolo has earthier, more mineral notes that I thought would give us a complementary and balanced flavor profile. For New Year's, we had a big bowl of popcorn and a bottle of Ruinart blanc de blancs (meaning it's a champagne made from all white grapes). We sat on the couch being thankful that 2020 had at least given us each other, but giving space to our cautious hope that 2021 would give us all back what Covid (and governmental cruelty and indifference) had stolen away.

In those moments, she was happy. I'd like to think she knew she was loved. Not because of the wine itself, but because what I hoped to express with it. Love is practice, and that practice is in listening, learning and sharing. I wanted to show I was thinking about her—what she likes and what brings her pleasure. It's too reductive to say it's in the "little things." These things are not little by any stretch. They're the foundation. They're the things we do every day, whether there's a glass of wine in front of us or not.

**Wine is already a
staple of romance.
It's built for it. It
stops time.**



VICTORIA KU

Instagram @forever_v_art







Happy to have you feature on Playboy! Can you give us a bit of a background on your career as a model and where it all started? It all started as a childhood dream, I always knew that one day I would be on your pages.

What are some of your best career highlights so far? I'm very grateful for every job that I've got but for me personally, the biggest highlight is starting my own charity foundation.

Social media is a very powerful tool, given your massive following, what are some of the challenges you face when it comes to marketing your brand and maintaining a solid following? Maintaining a balance between posting memes and posting nudes. Hehe

Can you give us a breakdown of a typical day in the life of a glamorous model on set? Honestly, I don't really think of myself as someone glamorous, I'm a simple and down-to-earth girl so you should probably ask someone like Bella Hadid.

What are some of the biggest misconceptions people have about what you do? People tend to think that I'm mean or unapproachable but actually I'm a sweetheart.

Now we know there are some pretty perks that come with being a beautiful woman, what would say are your favorite ones? People don't freak out when they find out I'm into conspiracy theories.

Given that you're a stunning woman who undoubtedly gets a lot of attention, what are some of the nicest things men have done to try and get your attention? I appreciate when guys are genuinely interested in my art, but flowers also work lol.

What makes you feel absolutely sexy? Being in love.

3 things that you can't go a day without? Good vibe, pretty smile, and gratitude.

Anything exciting we should be on the lookout for coming through this year from you? My main focus for this year is exploring the world so probably travel pics.

Where can our readers find out more about you and stay updated with your current events and adventures? On my IG of course! @Forever_v_art.

Thank you so much for sitting down with us and letting us get to know you! Any last words for our readers out there? Don't take life too seriously it's just a game.





Playboy Interview

James Carville

A candid conversation with the president's fire-eating, trash-talking campaign wizard about whining Democrats, two-faced Republicans, sex, politics and the art of the spin

WRITTEN BY BRIAN KAREM

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAM KITTNER



"He was sitting in my office, glowering and scowling," pollster Mark Mellman once told a reporter. "Then he stood up and walked around on top of the furniture. Then he started screaming as he was pacing. And I thought, Oh my God, I'm in the presence of a lunatic. Genius walks that fine line, I guess."

He is known as the "ragin' Cajun," "Serpent Head" and a host of other unfriendly terms by his friends, no less. The Republicans, meanwhile, have their own word for him: intimidating.

But James Carville isn't just a jumble of temper tantrums, emotional outbursts and colorful turns of phrase. He's a serious man with a serious job to persuade millions of people to like someone well enough to give him their votes. This year that someone is an old client: the president of the United States.

Carville is generally credited as the masterful engineer behind Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential victory. From the primaries down to the wire, that race introduced—and, in some cases, perfected—a new brand of campaign warfare, including cranked-up opposition research, hit and run attack ads, quick response rebuttals (sometimes within the same 24-hour news cycle), tag-team spin doctoring, town meetings and bus caravans.

While campaign watchers had come to know Carville fairly well in the months that led up to the election, the rest of America received a crash course on the man in the swell of publicity that followed Clinton's win. Carville became a favorite on the talk show circuit, delighting audiences with campaign tales spun in his spitfire Cajun dialect. He was extolled as the brains behind the campaign's muscle in the Academy Award-nominated documentary *The War Room*, which tracks the Clinton crusade from behind the scenes.

Carville's celebrity was given another half life when he married his one-time nemesis, former George Bush campaign strategist Mary Matalin. It was perhaps the unluckiest romance in D.C. history, top dogs on opposing political campaigns, facing off in an election for the country's highest office. (When Clinton won, Matalin told Carville, "You make me sick, I hate your guts.")

Once again, Carville is helping steer Clinton's campaign band wagon—and not only on the stump. His new best seller, *We're Right, They're Wrong: A Handbook for Spirited Progressives*, is Carville's attempt to sway—or perhaps bully—the electorate into seeing the world the way he views it: as a place where one can be politically progressive, socially traditional and outrageously outspoken all at once. One critic even compared the book to Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*.

Writes Carville: "People who have sucked from the government sugar tit all their lives, and now want to make sure it runs dry for everyone else—it's them versus us. Ours is the morally superior position."

Carville is a confessed late bloomer (the Clinton triumph occurred when he was 48) who embodies the loser-made-good persona. He is a hard talking, scrappy fighter who learns from his mistakes yet stubbornly continues to make them. He will mercilessly jab at an opponent, then quickly back off and assess the damage with a healthy measure of detached Southern charm.

Those who have watched Carville at work say he is the best spin doctor in the business, effortlessly twisting a rival's words or complex policy—or even the truth—to suit his immediate needs. He is also known as a bit of an oddball. "A lot of people who don't know him well think he tries hard to be eccentric," says friend and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. "But those of us who know him know that he actually tries very hard to be normal—and never quite gets there."

"I'm like uranium 235," Carville concurs, with pride. "Not quite stable."

On the way to his success, Carville has alienated a lot of people—and not just Republicans. His histrionic eruptions are widely known. When he exploded during a White House meeting with Hollywood producers, launching into a what do you rich folks

know about life routine, producer Gary David Goldberg dubbed him "Anthony Perkins playing Fidel Castro on acid." Others have accused him of dancing closer to the edge than even Republican strategist Lee Atwater, to whom Carville is often compared.

His over the top zeal isn't the only thing that sets him apart. He is also wildly superstitious. For luck, he wore black woolen gloves during the Clinton campaign. In other races, he's worn the same pair of underwear for at least a week, though he insists he washed them out each night. He also spent one election day "in the fetal position."

But beneath the drama and superstition is a masterful mind that runs on all cylinders during a campaign—prodding his candidate, intimidating the opposition, searching for that one message to inspire the electorate. (In 1992 it was the oft-repeated "It's the economy, stupid.") At the same time, Carville is a sucker for the underdog. "If you are on top of the world," White House aide George Stephanopoulos once said, "James doesn't have much time for you. But if the world's on top of you, he's right there."

Yet until his remarkable turnaround in the mid-1980s, Carville considered himself "a stoned ass loser."

Born in Louisiana in 1944 to a postmaster and his wife, and raised in a town on the Mississippi River that bears the family name, Chester James Carville Jr. had a happy childhood. Even ordinary boyhood upheavals took on a cheerful, optimistic spin. "When my dad pulled me aside and broke it to me that there was no Santa Claus," Carville remembers, "it was nothing compared with the glee of being the one who knew something that my younger brothers and sisters didn't know. Plus, I got to help my father put the stuff under the tree."

In 1962 Carville entered Louisiana State University, where he concentrated mostly on partying. ("I made John Belushi look like a scholar," he told *People*.) Exiting LSU early (some accounts say he was asked to leave), Carville joined the Marines, where he stayed for two years. He then returned to Baton Rouge, where he taught junior high while finishing college. He then earned a law degree from LSU. After an uneventful stint at a local law firm, Carville found politics. He worked mostly on losing campaigns, including Gary Hart's abortive 1984 presidential run. Things started to pick up in 1986, when Carville helped escort Democrat Bob Casey to the governorship of Pennsylvania. Then came the winning streak. In 1987 Carville engineered Wallace Wilkinson's come from behind victory in Kentucky's gubernatorial race, the next year, he managed Senator Frank Lautenberg's successful reelection bid in New Jersey. And in 1990 he took Zell Miller to the governor's mansion in Georgia.

But Carville pulled out all the stops for Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign. The process was captured in detail in *The War Room* as were the emotions that ran beneath it. In one scene, Carville breaks down during an impassioned farewell speech to his followers after Clinton's victory. It is a moment that defines James Carville, both his political passion and his soul.

These days, Carville is living a more comfortable life—emotionally and financially. Together he and Matalin chronicled the crazy days of the Clinton-Bush contest in the 1994 best seller *All's Fair: Love, War and Running for President* (Random House/Simon & Schuster), an extended two for one interview that reveals as much about their love affair as it does about the campaigns. The couple also tours the lecture circuit, commanding upwards of \$366,300.00 for a few hours of political banter and well-honed arguing. And last year Carville and Matalin became parents—the first time for both—when Mary gave birth to Matalin Mary Carville, whom they call Matty.

To uncork Carville, we sent Brian Kareem, who last interviewed Gordon Liddy for *PLAYBOY*, to Memphis, where Carville had a small part as a right wing prosecutor in director Milos Forman's film *The People Versus Larry Flynt*. Kareem reports:

"Trying to gain insight into Carville's life is like trying to de-

cipher the plot of a movie using a single frame of film. To wit: We began this interview as a casual chat on a commercial flight from Washington, D.C. to Memphis, we continued our talk in fits and starts on the set of *The People Versus Larry Flynt* (where I had to share James's time not only with Forman but also with co-stars Woody Harrelson, Courtney Love and James Cromwell). We wrapped up the interview with an intense session on a private jet flying from Memphis to Oregon, where Carville and his wife had a speaking engagement.

"In Portland, I got a true glimpse of the man. As subtle as a clenched fist, Carville hyperkinetically orbited his wife upon seeing her. And despite the much-discussed political chasm between them, their affection for each other appears genuine. 'My God, honey, you've got a great figure,' he drawled when he saw her. And then to me: 'Hey, you ever see a woman look so fine so soon after giving birth?'"

"The couple pulled no punches while picking on each other onstage that night. But when an audience member asked the pair if they bickered at home about the president—specifically about Clinton's alleged affair with Gennifer Flowers—Carville responded quickly. 'Look at that woman,' he said, pointing at Matalin, dressed smartly in red. 'If you were married to something as fine as that, would you go home and talk about Gennifer Flowers?'"

"The audience roared its approval, Matalin smiled and, in that one moment, James Carville was unmasked. At the age of 51, the unabashed defender of the left, the doggedly loyal Clintonite, had become domesticated.

"Does that leave the Democrats without their loudest, most articulate voice against the Republicans in this presidential election year? You be the judge.

"We began our conversation by talking about Carville's new career as an actor."

PLAYBOY: You've been on the set of a movie for two days now. How do you like working with Hollywood people?

CARVILLE: It's like I've been telling them. If you were to put all the people in Washington in Hollywood and all the people in Hollywood in Washington, the rest of the country would never know the difference. Or put it this way: Being in the Marine Corps and working on political campaigns is perfect training for working in the movies. Everything is late and screwed up.

But, no, it's fun. It really is.

PLAYBOY: Some people would say there's something wrong with mixing politics and Hollywood. Some would even charge that, in an election year, you've compromised your credibility by acting in a movie.

CARVILLE: Yeah, most of the people who say that are admirers of Ronald Reagan. [Laughs]

You know, I'm not a philosophical person or anything like that, but politics touches people's lives in many different ways all over the world. Is there a case to be made against those in political life who choose to become celebrities? Yeah. Am I the person to make that case? No.

PLAYBOY: So maybe you're just proving that there's no difference between show business and politics.

CARVILLE: [Grinning] That's right. Politics is show business for ugly people.

PLAYBOY: The *Chicago Tribune* once said of you: "Carville is all nerve endings and attitude, a brash and profane Cajun with a mobile face, a weakness for scotch whiskey and a mother named Miss Nippy."

CARVILLE: I take serious issue with that. I have a weakness for bourbon whiskey too. And gin and red wine.

PLAYBOY: You once said you would never run for anything but the state line. Now, this is the *Playboy* Interview, James. Are you letting us know there's something secret in your past?

CARVILLE: Hmm. Do you think I never bounced a check? Or made a forward remark to a subordinate? Or inhaled?

PLAYBOY: Whoa. We know about your check-bouncing days, but what about that subordinate?

CARVILLE: Well, that's all in the past. I'm happily married with a daughter now.

PLAYBOY: Fair enough. Let's move along. You have a pretty famous temper, especially when you're dealing with the media. Sam Donaldson once said—

CARVILLE: [Smiles] What did my old friend Sam have to say?

PLAYBOY: He told Larry King that whenever you are asked a tough question you don't want to answer, you go into a rage, saying "How can you believe this bunch of junk?" or "Is this all you have to do with your time?"

CARVILLE: Certainly there are some questions I don't want to answer, but there's an old saying and it's true. There are no bad questions, only bad answers. There's also a sense that if you are big enough to play in this league, you're big enough to take the questions. And of course, the appropriate answer to questions such as the ones Sam asks is, "You're spending too much time

on X—it's irrelevant to what people want to know." That's what is called "turning the question." And where is it written, anyway, that the interviewer has to be in total control of the interview? The interviewee can try to turn the interview to his or her agenda.

PLAYBOY: We'll try to remember that. **CARVILLE:** Sam is a damn good reporter, a tough reporter and he understands that a good interview subject isn't just going to sit there and answer his questions word for word.

PLAYBOY: Cynics would call that dodging the truth.

CARVILLE: Some people would say that. Others would say it's cynical for

the media to keep asking the kinds of questions people consider irrelevant.

As I see it, the larger point here is that in a political discussion, neither the interviewer nor the interviewee is on a higher moral plane. If you're being interviewed and you're constantly evading, the ultimate arbiter of that will be the listeners, the viewers or the readers. And they'll say, you know, "That guy is just full of shit." If the question being asked is fact-relevant, then it requires a fact-relevant answer. But if the question is irrelevant, the interviewee has the right to point that out.

PLAYBOY: But you do admit that part of your job is to "spin" the truth?

CARVILLE: Certainly. If you're interviewing me on television or in *PLAYBOY* or in a newspaper, I'm going to put the most faithful light I possibly can on the president. I can't think of any body who has been better to me, nicer to me or has given me more of a chance to be at the top of the world than President Clinton. And I hope I don't let him down. Does that mean I agree with everything he does? No, I don't. But, you know, he's not there to please me. He has to do what he thinks he needs to do.

PLAYBOY: But we're spinning off the topic again. Do we, as Americans, lose something important if we can't count on people like you to tell us the plain truth?

CARVILLE: No, because people know. If somebody reading this magazine is too stupid to understand that I have the president's

interests at heart, then he's probably too stupid to get this far in the interview. I mean, if you're looking to me for objectivity, then put the magazine down, okay?

I am not an objective guy. I am a guy with a point of view. I represent the interests of those I work for. People understand that I don't pretend to be an impartial observer. I'm not. There's an adage in politics. If your guy is in trouble, throw water. If the other guy is in trouble, throw kerosene.

PLAYBOY: In November 1992 you watched as your finely tuned campaign transformed into the office of the president elect. How is running a campaign different from the actual art of governing, once you win?

CARVILLE: On election night, when you win, you get to breathe the most rarefied air on earth. The thing that makes political campaigns different from any other endeavor is that one moment, election night. Most other things go on. This magazine, for instance, is going to put out an issue in July. Then it's going to put out an issue in August. And, of course, its goal is to be around in the year 2006, too. A political campaign, on the other hand, builds itself up, explodes and then ends. That's the aphrodisiac of it. That's why when people start working on political campaigns, it's hard for them to do something else. That's how you get the term political junkie. That's why you say the [political] "bug" bites somebody. You need a fix. And that is completely different from governing, which is a process that goes on and on.

PLAYBOY: Have you ever done anything in a campaign that you later regretted?

CARVILLE: Well, when the end of my life is approaching, I'm sure there will be lots of things I will seek redemption for. But in terms of the kinds of campaigns I've run and the relationships I've had, when the great scorer comes to my name, I think he'll say, "Hey, you did more good than bad." But did I ever try to drive a story a certain way? Sure. Have I ever been manipulative? The answer is yes.

PLAYBOY: Like the Bob Casey–William Scranton gubernatorial race in Pennsylvania in 1986? During that election you wanted to put a commercial together saying your opponent had smoked pot. You even leaked that to a reporter.

CARVILLE: No, No, No. It's a little more complicated than that. Casey said he would never bring up our opponent's previous use of drugs. So another guy and I were sitting around, and I said, "Well, let's just tell somebody that we want to make the commercial, but our candidate won't let us." And we got the story in the paper. [Laughs] I mean, yeah, it was manipulation.

PLAYBOY: And unethical?

CARVILLE: I don't know how unethical it was. If you ask me if it was my finest hour, then no, it wasn't. And in all honesty, it didn't turn out to be a huge story. Still, it was a close race. I don't think it won the election for us or anything like that. And given the number of questions I've had to answer about it, if we had it to do over again, we probably wouldn't.

PLAYBOY: In any case, that was your first big victory. Then you got on a hot streak, and in 1992 you hooked up with Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton.

CARVILLE: And he gave me my big chance.

PLAYBOY: But the campaign got in trouble early. You actually coached the Clintons on their 60 Minutes appearance in which they addressed his alleged marital infidelity.

CARVILLE: Let me give credit where credit is due. The impetus

behind that was the president and first lady. They both said, "We need to get in front of this." And it just so happens that 60 Minutes was on right after the Super Bowl.

PLAYBOY: That must have been a particularly tense time.

CARVILLE: You have no idea. I felt like I couldn't win. I had no idea how tired I would get—how tired everybody was. There's just no way to make people understand how much you go through during something like that.

That whole New Hampshire primary in 1992 was something. Whenever you said, "I can't take any more of this," there was always more to take.

PLAYBOY: What did you ultimately learn from it?

CARVILLE: You got a year? I'll tell you, I believe that, basically, my whole life had been a preparation for that. The one thing my folks drilled into me was, Don't be a quitter. If you get into a bad job, don't quit. If you start to work on something, go all out for the team. Don't quit.

PLAYBOY: In the Academy Award-nominated documentary *The War Room*, you break down and cry during your speech to the victorious Clinton campaign workers. What brought on the tears?

CARVILLE: Knowing that I started working toward something when I was 38 years old, and ten years later, realizing that I was at the top of what I set out to do. Remember, I had lived and worked with these people—some of them for ten months. It just hit me. I remember when I got up to give the talk, there was a

lot I wanted to say, and I wanted to be eloquent. But I couldn't get any of it out. And I'll never forget when I sat down, I said to myself, "I blew it." But when the president saw the movie, he called me to say how proud he was of me, and how I had raised the truth in that speech.

PLAYBOY: And now you have essentially made yourself a national figure by helping deliver the White House back to the Democrats. But let's discuss the opposition. Someone once said, "Republicans are sore losers, but they don't even have the

sense to admit when they've been defeated. And for that they are to be both loathed and admired." True?

CARVILLE: Well, I loathe them and admire them, too. But I will tell you one thing I truly admire about the Republicans: They work their butts off.

PLAYBOY: Really?

CARVILLE: Look, I'm tired of the Democrats whining and complaining about Rush Limbaugh. I don't agree with Rush Limbaugh, but he gets up every morning and goes to work. He throws his boots on and he's got a job to do. Then the Democrats whine and complain about the Christian right. Well, the Christian right raises its money and does its thing. I don't want to whine about them. I want to fight them. Understand? I think they're wrong, but I don't say, "Oh my God, they're here! They're here!" They go out and organize as hard as they can, and they're beating us not because their ideas are better but because they're outworking us.

If you want to see the whiningest, complainingest bunch of do-good weenies, look at the liberals. My message is: Quit complaining. Get off your butts and organize. Get out your checkbook. Write letters to the editor. Do the things Republicans do. **PLAYBOY:** Are you saying you admire the way Republicans run for office?

CARVILLE: I don't admire the way the Republicans twist the facts. But, yes, I admire their work ethic. As I've said, the difference between the Republicans and the Democrats is that the

Republicans go about doing the wrong things in the right way, and the Democrats go about doing the right things in the wrong way
PLAYBOY: Let's run through some of the president's critics, starting with Bob Dole.

CARVILLE: I don't know about Bob Dole. I don't think he's a bad man. I guess I can grow to dislike him. But his time to be president is gone. He reminds me of what I once said about George Bush. When I look at an old calendar, it reminds me of Bob Dole.
PLAYBOY: Newt Gingrich

CARVILLE: You know, I've tried to work up some human feelings for Newt Gingrich. I've really tried. And what I've come up with is being within a centimeter of feeling sorry for him. And then I remember him saying that I—and the people who believe as I do—caused [convicted murderer] Susan Smith to push her children into that lake, when, in fact, she had been living with a Republican official who was a member of the Christian Coalition and who was molesting her. Then I got mad.

And as if that weren't enough, Gingrich then said that this horrible case in Chicago—where somebody, I think, ripped the unborn child out of a woman happened because of people like me and my friends and those I work for.

So deep down inside I just can't master any sympathy for Newt Gingrich. I don't wish him ill health, I don't wish ill of his family and I hope his daughters and wife love him. Other than that, I can't think of anything I wouldn't like to visit upon him.

[Clearly agitated] I mean, I would like to see him defeated. I would like to see him politically disgraced. I would like to see him run out of town.

PLAYBOY: You're angry

CARVILLE: This is something I've really struggled with. That man has been so callous and has never once apologized. Never once expressed any remorse about what he's said about the president and Mrs. Clinton. And then he talks about having family responsibility. Hell, his own church took up a collection to take care of his kids. He served his first wife divorce papers while she was in the hospital recovering from surgery. But I want to be clear, I don't wish him any unhappiness in his family life. Other than that, let the rain fall.

PLAYBOY: Is Gingrich a secret weapon for the Democratic Party?

CARVILLE: He's not very secret.

PLAYBOY: Let's move on. Pat Buchanan

CARVILLE: Like most people in Washington, I'm torn about Pat Buchanan. In one sense, I find him to be a personable enough guy, and I like his sense of personal values. But I'm probably closer philosophically to Newt Gingrich than I am to Pat Buchanan. [Laughs]

I will say this for Buchanan. He understands more than any other Republican what has happened to the workingman in this country. Still, we have entirely different ideas about how to solve the problem.

PLAYBOY: Is political dialogue in this country getting more or less rancorous?

CARVILLE: It's definitely filled with more rancor. I think it's gotten real bad. But I hope the political marketplace will work its magic. We're already seeing signs that people are tired of politi-

cians' mudslinging. Again, look at the Republicans—I've got to keep coming back to this. No Democrat ever blamed a Republican because someone drove her kids into a lake or ripped a fetus out of somebody. I mean, it was a Republican in Kentucky who had the first lady hung in effigy at a rally. It was a Republican who said the president better have a bodyguard to come to North Carolina [for] *his personal safety*.] Senator Jesse Helms said that.

PLAYBOY: What does that say about the state of our national debate?
CARVILLE: Well, it certainly doesn't say anything for Jesse Helms. I hope the people of North Carolina will get rid of him next term. That will say something nice about the people of North Carolina.

But, no, the problem with the Republicans is that they want everyone to live life the way they want to. As long as you think the way they do, you're okay. Me, I think the best way to have a happy life is to take what the Republicans say and do the opposite. But in the end, the more people involved in the process of democracy, the better. I mean, the founding fathers were fine and everything, but they weren't perfect. You had to be a white male property owner to vote.

Those were the good old days?

We should get as many people educated and involved as possible. That's democracy. I think it's a great system. I love it.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk a little more about the media. Do you think the press has been fair to President Clinton?

CARVILLE: No.

PLAYBOY: Why not?

CARVILLE: I'm not sure they've been fair to any president, but I'd say they have been more unfair to President Clinton. I think most of them actually believe it's wrong to be fair. I'll give you my favorite example. Every news organization in this country reported and every American believed that President Clinton held up air traffic at Los Angeles International Airport while he got a haircut. That was totally fabricated. And when I tell people that, they look stunned. Now, I have to give Newsday credit. Someone went back and got the FAA records

and discovered that no commercial aircraft were held up for any length of time. Someone at the FAA even said, "All they had to do was ask us." It's not even the way the commercial aircraft system works.

PLAYBOY: So how does a story like that get started?

CARVILLE: Exactly how they said it got started. The reporters were sitting on the ground and the president made them wait. They wanted to go home, so they got mad and decided to burn him. But the point is, after the media became aware of what the real story was, only three or four [newspapers] bothered to correct it. No network did.

PLAYBOY: None of this is new. Many politicians claim that the press is out to get them. But look at it from the other side. Why would the press want to pick on Clinton like that?

CARVILLE: At the time, the press had decided that President Clinton had gone Hollywood and that he'd sort of lost interest in the people who elected him. So this story fulfilled their prophecy. Of course, they weren't interested in the accuracy of the story; only in fulfilling their prophecy. That's the real weakness of the

press. They decide on a point of view and then look for information to back it up. And they ignore any facts that show otherwise.
PLAYBOY: If that's the case, why do the conservatives believe that all of us in the press are nothing but bootlicking liberals?

CARVILLE: There is no liberal bias in the press. There's sort of a "bad news bias." Like my friend Sam Donaldson once said. No one ever reports that a thousand airplanes landed safely today. My point is, if you're going to report a crash, there actually ought to have been a crash. Don't make one up.

Let me give you another example—the famous Jennifer Flowers tape. All three networks reported on [the taped telephone call with Clinton's alleged former mistress] Jennifer Flowers. When the media found out that the tape was edited in 12 different places, not one of them mentioned that. And if you ask them why they didn't, they look at you like you're crazy: "Why would we do that? That would make us look bad." That's not fair.

PLAYBOY: Another topic the president is frequently forced to address has nothing to do with his job performance. Rather, it's about his wife. On one hand, Mrs. Clinton has been criticized for everything from her handling of health care to her hardships. On the

other hand, and I'll just quote my grandmother here: "Hillary Clinton ought to tell her critics to go to hell and mind their own business." Do you agree?

CARVILLE: Well, I have to make a confession here. I'm a big admirer of Mrs. Clinton. And I think your grandmother sees something in her that a lot of people who don't know her well don't see: She is a very soft, caring lady. That doesn't mean she can't be tough. A lot of people don't understand that when Mrs. Clinton came along, women were bursting into the professional workplace and, by and large, had to be tough. I mean, they didn't have glass ceilings then—they had steel ceilings. Nowadays, people tend to look at these women and say, "Gee, they're kind of abrasive." Well, these women are abrasive for a purpose. They have had to be.

PLAYBOY: Isn't it also the issue of how men are perceived versus how women are perceived? Hillary Clinton appears abrasive, but if she were a man, she wouldn't seem that way.

CARVILLE: Right. And I don't find Hillary Clinton abrasive at all.
PLAYBOY: Could?

CARVILLE: No. I think that, for good and compelling reasons, she limits the number of people she trusts—and because of that, she is misunderstood. It feeds on itself to some extent. If people would take the time to understand her, they'd see she's warm and very pro-family. In fact, she's a lot more conservative on certain social issues than one might think.

PLAYBOY: Tell us one thing you know about Mrs. Clinton that the rest of us should know.

CARVILLE: Okay, I'll tell you something. You have all of these pontificating, lecturing, holier-than-thou Republicans screaming how pro-family they are, how moral they are, how people ought to accept responsibility. Then this great freshman class of 1994 came to Washington to change things. Well, the only thing they've changed is their spouses.

Now, what did Hillary Clinton do when she was first lady of

Arkansas? She moved her parents to Arkansas so they could be closer to her and be part of her family. Yet all these great Republicans want to put her down—they get on the pulpit and preach about Mrs. Clinton being anti-family. It's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of. Absolutely absurd.

And I'll tell you another thing—and my wife, who as we know is a Republican, agrees with me on this. We both admire the way the Clintons have brought up their daughter, Chelsea. They have done a magnificent job of raising her.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about the president's performance after the election. One of the first big issues he tried to tackle was gays in the military, but his strategy backfired, and he was roundly criticized for it. Was it a mistake to bring up that issue so soon?

CARVILLE: It hurt the president politically, so, yes, it was a political mistake. But I still believe he exercised some moral authority on the issue, even at his own cost. And I don't think we've seen the final chapter on that yet.

PLAYBOY: How so?

CARVILLE: Let's say that one day something happens and we need a president who can speak to the issue of discrimination.

I think President Clinton can use his moral authority to say, "I have stood up and fought discrimination. Even at a cost to myself." I don't know. Maybe it will happen after his second term in office. Look at President Carter. His insistence on human rights was vehemently criticized throughout his presidency. It affected his foreign policy and hurt him politically. But now he has the moral authority to represent his country on those issues. So, the act hasn't played out yet for President Clinton. We don't know where it's going to end.

PLAYBOY: We will ask again. Is this spin control?

CARVILLE: That's not spin. [Pause] Well, that is spin. But it's fact-based spin.

PLAYBOY: Okay. Another early problem in the Clinton administration was universal health care. It failed miserably. Why?

CARVILLE: Because we didn't do a good enough job explaining it to people. What happened there was simple. People didn't believe the truth.

PLAYBOY: What was the truth?

CARVILLE: That universal health care would have been cheaper. It is cheaper to insure everyone.

PLAYBOY: So what was the problem?

CARVILLE: We said we could insure more people and it would cost less money. And that is, in fact, what would happen. But the problem is, we were asking people to believe something that rubs against the grain of what they think.

PLAYBOY: Let's be honest, James. Even people well versed on the subject of health care would need a Harvard expert to decipher the plan the president put forward.

CARVILLE: Okay, but you need a Harvard expert for the current system, too, and people still can't figure out how it works. Look at Hawaii. About the only thing cheaper than sunlight and pineapples out there is health care. They insure just about everyone. The reason? It's cheaper to insure everyone because the costs go down as the benefits go up.

But the central question is: How do you view health care? Do

you view it like food—where, you know, some people can afford to eat at a fine restaurant and others can afford only fast food? If so, should we be satisfied with that? Can we take the huge discrepancies in the amount and quality of health care we receive? If my baby were to get leukemia, would she have any more right to live than someone who can't afford health care? I don't think we're willing to accept that in this country.

PLAYBOY: Certainly no sane person would accept it.

CARVILLE: Well, that's not the way the insurance lobby looks at it. The insurance lobby is out of step with what most Americans want and need.

PLAYBOY: But getting back to the point, you're saying the failure of the president's universal health care plan wasn't his fault—it was the fault of those responsible for getting his message out?

CARVILLE: The truth is, I don't know if it's the fault of the White House and people like me who are supposed to get the president's message out, or the fault of the people in the media who are supposed to report on what's going on in this country. Like most things, I assume it's a combination of both.

PLAYBOY: Can the same thing be said for Whitewater?

CARVILLE: No. [Laughs] Do you know there have been more hearings on Whitewater than there have been on Watergate, Social Security and Medicare combined?

PLAYBOY: Apparently this is another hot button for you.

CARVILLE: People should understand that the Republican Party is using congressional power and spending time and money on something you shouldn't care about—i.e., Whitewater—when things you should care about—i.e., education and health care—are ignored. Let me tell you: If the Republican Party spent a little more time educating people, keeping this environment going in the right direction and bringing more health care to people, we could be a long way toward solving those problems. But the Republican Party isn't doing that, because it has a singular interest and obsession, and that's Whitewater.

PLAYBOY: That sounds an awful lot like what the Republicans said about the Democrats during Watergate.

CARVILLE: Exactly. So why don't they just admit that this is payback time? They're not doing very well right now, this is an election year and they need the fuel. I can understand that, so let's get on with it. I mean, does anybody in America believe that senators such as Al D'Amato are going to give one hoot about Whitewater after the November elections? Of course not. D'Amato is Dole's national campaign chairman, so they ought to make the Dole campaign pay for the Whitewater hearings. No, this is a purely political thing being dragged out just to help the Republican Party.

PLAYBOY: Then again, with or without opposition, how effective can a president be? Dennis Miller recently said that the president—not just President Clinton, but any president—doesn't really make a difference in how things turn out. The office, he said, is nothing more than that of a PR flack. A lot of younger voters believe that.

CARVILLE: Dennis Miller. I mean, so what? My gut reaction is that Dennis Miller is just somebody else with an opinion. But I believe this president has made a difference. Ask the 44,000 felons who've been stopped from buying handguns. Ask the hundreds of thousands of people who have family and medical leave today if the president has made a difference. Ask the 15 million people who get a tax break under the earned income tax credit. Ask the

hundreds of thousands of people in this country who are not victims of crime because the crime rate has gone down—ask them if the president has made a difference. So you have some bigmouth flapping his jaws on national TV. So what? I mean, Dennis Miller doesn't know what's going on in America any more than he knows about flying to the moon.

PLAYBOY: But getting back to his point, there are a growing number of young people who seem to believe that one person, even the president, can't make a difference.

CARVILLE: I know, so I try to change the people's minds so they know just how much President Clinton has done since he's been in office.

PLAYBOY: So tell us what he's done.

CARVILLE: I already mentioned some of it, but Bill Clinton is also the first president since World War Two to reduce the deficit three years in a row. Also, 8 million jobs created, a sustained economic recovery, a record number of small businesses started, the Brady Bill, the assault weapons ban, the first—albeit mild—increase in students' test scores, and family and medical leave, which means people can go home and take care of their children and their parents. Then look at the rest of the world. Democracy has been restored in Haiti, nuclear weapons have been turned away in the Ukraine and we're working on peace in Northern Ireland. So far we've stopped the war in Bosnia—a war that has killed 250,000 people. Yes, in this process others may be killed. But I

hope very few will be Americans. Look, the accomplishments are there, the record is there, the performance is there. And the more we accentuate that performance, the more people will see the job our president has done.

PLAYBOY: OK, let's take a break and talk about the really important issues, like sex. Your character in the roman a clef *Primary Colors* certainly got laid a lot.

CARVILLE: Yeah, I wish it were true.

PLAYBOY: So that means, no, you didn't get laid a lot during the 1992 campaign?

CARVILLE: [Laughs] No, I didn't. Because I'm not as needy as all that. And besides, a presidential campaign is a lot of hard work. You don't have time

PLAYBOY: Then explain this. In one of the more memorable scenes in the book, your character pulls out his dick and shows it to a campaign worker, and she says, "I have never seen one quite that old."

CARVILLE: That happened, but it was my shirttail.

PLAYBOY: You whipped out your shirttail?

CARVILLE: [Laughs] Yeah. I kind of stuck my shirttail through my zipper and said to this woman, "Hey, look a here." And she was a real cool comeback person. She said, "Gee, I've never seen one so old." It was actually nothing but a shirttail. Hey, there's a lot of horsing around on a campaign, just like there is on, you know, movie sets or anywhere else.

PLAYBOY: So in reality, the campaign pretty much messed up your love life with your future wife [former Bush campaign strategist Mary Matalin].

CARVILLE: Put it this way. If anybody can figure out a way to have a love life when one person lives in Little Rock and the other person lives in Washington, D.C., let me know.

PLAYBOY: So how has life been for the Carvilles since the 1992 election?

CARVILLE: Very good. My wife is a really cool woman. She's fun, she's nice looking, she's very supportive of her husband and has a real sassy flair about her. I mean, every now and then I'll be watching her at some social event or something and I just stop and

think about it. Then I get this smile on my face and say, "God damn, you old coon ass, you married you one hell of a cool lady." You know what I mean? She's really got it. Of course, that's not to say she can't rag on you pretty good and drive you crazy. But she has a joie de vivre about her. I really admire that.

PLAYBOY: You, the great Southern orator, actually had a hard time popping the question?

CARVILLE: [Laughs] Yeah, well, my wife wound up telling me that I was going to do it.

PLAYBOY: She did?

CARVILLE: Yes. She ordered the ring, and when she got it she told me, "You're going to ask me to marry you. This is where you're going to ask me, and this is what you're going to say."

PLAYBOY: Like if she were running a campaign.

CARVILLE: She runs me pretty good.

PLAYBOY: The wedding was in New Orleans, with Sonny Bono and Rush Limbaugh in attendance. Sounds like it was a sideshow.

CARVILLE: Yeah, Timothy Hutton and Al Hart were there, too. I'll tell you one thing. Nobody had more fun at that wedding than I did. It became known in Louisiana as *Da Weddin' D-A-W-E-D D-I-N*. Man, we had a great time. It started with a cocktail party, then when it was time to get married we just opened the doors and people carried their drinks into where the ceremony was. After the wedding we had a parade—and you know, New Orleans loves a parade. We had a brass band, and everybody just kind of marched down Bourbon Street. People were throwing things and jazz music was playing. A lot of fun.

PLAYBOY: Do you consider yourself a lucky man?

CARVILLE: I sure do. I don't know what I did to deserve all this, probably very little. But it's like Jack Benny said, "I don't deserve this award, but I have arthritis and I don't deserve that, either." [Laughs] So I'll take it.

PLAYBOY: As we speak, your new book is ranked number three on the best seller list—and rising. With the election approaching, the timing is certainly fortunate.

CARVILLE: Well, I cannot tell a lie. I planned it that way. And it seems these liberal books are

starting to catch on with the public.

PLAYBOY: Why, do you suppose?

CARVILLE: I think people are sick and tired of hearing the Republicans and their people distort the facts, and now they're looking for

PLAYBOY: The Democrats to also distort the facts?

CARVILLE: [Laughs] Well, they're looking to us to straighten the facts out. I think this book goes to the heart of that.

PLAYBOY: How did you come up with the title *We're Right, They're Wrong*?

CARVILLE: Well, you know how they talk about how rancorous today's politics are, right? Actually, I got the title from a speech Harry Truman gave in 1948. He said, "They're wrong and we're right and I'm going to prove it to you." So I put my own little spin on that.

PLAYBOY: Naturally.

CARVILLE: And I did that because Democrats have become so timid—and progressives have become so scared—that we are afraid to fight back. We don't take pride in any of our accomplishments. We're timid about our philosophy that work itself is sacred and noble and an inherently worthwhile thing. The Republican

ideal has become a chic fad, and we've forgotten the workingman. I want my message to the Democratic Party to be, "Don't just sit there—fight the Republicans. Fight for what we believe in."

PLAYBOY: Let's discuss your career. You hit rock bottom while working on the Gary Hart campaign in 1984. You were heading back to your hotel in Maryland. You were standing on a curb on Massachusetts Avenue in the middle of a rainstorm when your garment bag broke and all of your belongings fell into the muddy street. The story goes, you had about \$110.00 to your name and just sat down in the rain and cried.

CARVILLE: That happened. I could take you right now and show you the exact spot where it happened. I was 38 years old; I was trying to work my way into the campaign and didn't have much money. I wouldn't have known what a health insurance policy looked like, if someone hit me on the head with one. But I did have more than \$110.00—I think it was something like \$660.00. And I called a friend and said, "Man, I can't live like this no more. You got to send me five grand. I can't leech off people like this. I'm just out." He sent me the money. I healed up.

PLAYBOY: How did you eventually rise above that?

CARVILLE: I have self-confidence, and I got that from my family. Even when I was a stone loser in life at 38, I never lost a sense

of confidence. And I'm not talking about the confidence to solve a calculus problem or any such thing as that. I know my limitations. But I'll tell you what: I've never wanted to be anybody in life other than myself. And that was before I became the husband of Mary Matalin, and the subject of documentaries and an actor in movies.

PLAYBOY: You credit your parents for your confident streak. What was it about growing up in Carville, Louisiana that made you so self-assured?

CARVILLE: I had a very happy childhood and just assumed everyone else did too. I can say that with every shred of honesty I have. I can not remember an unhappy moment as a child.

I was lucky. I had a horse when I was six years old. My grandparents

lived down the road. I could stay with them if I wanted to. I was loved and never wanted for anything. And to tell the truth, I was kind of oblivious to what was going on in the world around me.

PLAYBOY: Until you read *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Then everything changed.

CARVILLE: It's just that I had never really thought about things like race. I mean, you had white folks and you had black folks, and white folks got things and black folks didn't. Thus it was, thus it is, thus it shall be. And I didn't question it, it was sort of a benign world I lived in. I didn't pay attention to the fact that some people are robbed of their dignity.

But then I read *To Kill a Mockingbird* and what happened to Tom Robinson, and I knew instinctively that (a) it happened to a lot of other people and (b) it probably happened to people right around where I grew up—and that it would happen again. And that caused me to question what I'd always accepted. I was 16 years old, and that started a process that changed my view of the world. **PLAYBOY:** Let's get back to the issues. You're one of the few people we know who would argue that the federal government has done something right. Why, then, do most people believe that we should shrink it, weaken it or do away with it altogether?

CARVILLE: Look at all the good the federal government has done

In the past 30 years, 50 percent of the money spent by the federal government has gone to three things—defense, Social Security and Medicare. We won the Cold War; the federal government did that. The poverty rate among the elderly in this country has gone from 27 percent in 1965 to about 11 percent today. In terms of Medicare, the only health statistic that the U.S. beats the world in is life expectancy. These are historic, societal achievements. And in a country known for health care that lags behind its prosperity, the way we deliver health care to our elderly is the finest in the world.

PLAYBOY: Still, some would say those gains have been made at the cost of our future. The deficit is at record levels, people believe we're taxed too much—

CARVILLE: Hold on. As a fraction of our economy, we have the lowest deficit of any industrialized country in the world, with the possible exception of Norway. And we've had the lowest taxes of any industrialized country in the world, tied only with Japan.

PLAYBOY: Then why do Americans think the federal government is failing us?

CARVILLE: Because the party that has created these programs and ought to be standing on a mountaintop taking credit for them—the Democratic Party—has turned into a bunch of well-meaning weenies who apologize for everything we do. I don't apologize for my party's giving us the healthiest elderly population in the world. I celebrate it! I don't apologize for the fact that the Soviet Union doesn't exist anymore—I celebrate it! It was a Democratic president who came up with the policy of containment. And it was a Democratic Congress —

PLAYBOY: Wait a minute. Most people credit Ronald Reagan with winning the Cold War.

CARVILLE: First of all, Carter started the defense buildup. And if you go back, it was Truman's policy of containment that did the Russians in.

PLAYBOY: That's not an easy sell.

CARVILLE: Fine. I'll be glad to give some credit to the Republicans. But, by and large, the Democratic Party came up with the strategy, and we ought to take credit for it. We ought to fight to be recognized for it.

PLAYBOY: More spin control?

CARVILLE: That's not spin control. That's just history. Facts.

PLAYBOY: Then maybe the Democratic Party should speak up more, because the majority of Americans believe the federal government is screwed up.

CARVILLE: Can you believe the environmental successes in this country in the past 25 years? Who beat the Mafia? I mean, who basically drove a spike through the heart of the Mafia? Who built the interstate highway system? Who funded the research that eventually defeated polio?

PLAYBOY: Let's guess.

CARVILLE: The federal government. There were two things I was scared of when I was a child—nuclear bombs from Russia and getting polio. My child does not have to be scared of either one. Who the hell do the people think did that?

There's a mentality in this country—and it's fueled by the Republicans and ignited by the press—that the federal government has never done any good. That's just damn crazy! That is totally, totally wrong.

PLAYBOY: In this year's State of the Union address, the president challenged Americans to take greater responsibility for their own lives. At the same time, though, he recommended the introduction of the V-chip—a device in television sets that will block out certain

programming—as well as uniforms for schoolchildren.

CARVILLE: But those are examples of how you can.

PLAYBOY: Wait a second. Our question is, why do we need either one of those things? If we're taking responsibility for our own lives, why do we need the federal government butting in? Everyone knows it's impossible to legislate people into being more responsible. They'll either be more responsible or they won't.

CARVILLE: You know what? That's the same thing they said [*about integration*]. "You can't legislate putting together people of both races." Shit, you can't, but what you can do is legislate to empower people to exercise responsibility. It's just another tool. All the V-chip does is let parents program their TV so their kids can't watch certain programs. That gives you, the parent, power to exercise more responsibility over your children. Shit, I may not want my child to watch, you know, Jerry Falwell on TV. Well, now I can V-chip him right out. [*Laughs*]

PLAYBOY: If I'm a responsible person, I'm going to be that way no matter what you legislate. And if I'm not, there's no way you can legislate me into being different. So why waste time with things like the V-chip?

CARVILLE: All the V-chip does is give you another tool—an on/off switch if you're not around to turn off the television set. With the V-chip, you can still be responsible for what your children watch.

PLAYBOY: What about school uniforms?

CARVILLE: That was just a recommendation, because the federal government doesn't really have anything to do with what children wear in various school districts. But if I were on a school board, I would be for school uniforms.

PLAYBOY: Why?

CARVILLE: It runs deeper than you think. One of the things we're losing as a nation is a sense of commonality, a sense of national purpose, a sense of experiencing the same thing. We're becoming increasingly fragmented by income in this nation, and that's a distressing trend.

When I was a schoolteacher, everybody was roughly the same economically. But not anymore. School uniforms take a lot of pressure off children. They may not be for every school district, but they will work for some.

PLAYBOY: You're talking about treating the symptom of the problem rather than the cause.

CARVILLE: Sometimes you have to treat the symptom. I mean, you can have an infection that causes a headache, so you take an antibiotic and an aspirin at the same time. In fact, people do it all the time. But, no, you're right. The best way to address the cause is to help kids do better in school and to enhance their education. School uniforms help in a minor way. Do I think they're a panacea? No, I don't.

PLAYBOY: Gordon Liddy told us the difference between a liberal and a conservative is that "a liberal is someone who wants to do good for other people with your money, not his. A conservative believes the best thing you can do for most people is to leave them the hell alone."

CARVILLE: Well, I'm a liberal and I pay taxes just like conservatives do. But you know, Gordon Liddy and people like him who say they want to leave people alone also want to make it illegal for women to have abortions. They want to make it illegal to buy certain kinds of books or magazines. The truth is, they want to have individual freedom when it suits them, but not when it doesn't suit them. So I don't know where Gordon Liddy gets off thinking he

pays any more taxes than I do.

Listen, I think we ought to help one another out. We ought to provide opportunities. We ought to have public education. We ought to make job training tax-deductible. We ought to secure people's retirement.

PLAYBOY: But, what's wrong with those who say, "Hey, I pulled myself up by my bootstraps—why don't you?"

CARVILLE: Yeah, I've heard that argument. But how many of those who say that have actually pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps? Phil Gramm likes to talk that way, yet I don't think he's ever earned a dollar that didn't come from the taxpayers. With the possible exception of money he got from investing in porno flicks, the man has been living off government paychecks his whole adult life. He's so hypocritical.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying the self-made man is a myth?

CARVILLE: No. Look closely. Some people are self-made, but not many of them are Republican officeholders. That's my point. A lot of them went to public schools and got public funds. If they're all so self-made, let them turn down the mortgage-interest deduction. Let them say they don't want it.

No, I'm not saying the self-made man is a myth. I'm saying damn few self-made men are Republicans.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about a few social issues. In *We're Right, They're Wrong*, you take a pretty strong position on single-parent families. Tell us about that.

CARVILLE: The two biggest mistakes we made in this country—mistakes that have long-term consequences—are (a) promoting the idea that two-parent families are somehow irrelevant to raising children, and (b) Reaganomics—which, of course, we'll be paying for for about a gazillion years.

PLAYBOY: The Republicans are clearly responsible for Reaganomics. But don't liberal Democrats have to take responsibility for the former?

CARVILLE: Let me just say it right out. That sort of 1970s movement—which was basically a movement among a lot of liberals who said a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle—was just flat ass wrong.

PLAYBOY: And yet it became quite fashionable in the late 1960s and early 1970s to try on a marriage like you would a sweater—and if it didn't fit, you got rid of it.

CARVILLE: Right. Well, this philosophy was created by the liberals. And I must say that conservatives practice it more than we do. [*Laughs*] They take advantage of it. Still, the people who thought it up were well-meaning but wrong.

PLAYBOY: You're sounding an awful lot like a conservative yourself.

CARVILLE: No. I am a traditionalist. There's a difference. When you say social conservative, to my ear that's someone who is, like, antiblack or antigay, you know? A social traditionalist, however, is someone who, as I say in my book, believes that two-parent families aren't always possible but are almost always preferable. That's my opinion, anyway. Liberals must take responsibility for this whole single-parent movement. We were wrong. Okay? Admit it. There. Move on.

PLAYBOY: You also call yourself a fiscal liberal. Care to explain that?

CARVILLE: I believe government should invest in its people. After all, the most valuable, most sacred thing you can give—other than your life—is your labor. And the government has a responsibility to see that people can make the most of themselves. So the programs that are most sacred to me are the ones that reward work, the ones that give people an opportunity to enhance their ability to work and the ones that give people security after they retire.

PLAYBOY: But how do you answer the Republican charge that a lot of people take unfair advantage of these programs—that they are stealing from the government?

CARVILLE: Hey, I'm not going to say there's not waste. I'm not going to say there's not some corruption. But you don't get

rid of the federal government because of it. You fix the things that don't work.

PLAYBOY: You have coined a phrase about all this. You call Democrats who believe as you do "5-65 Democrats."

CARVILLE: That's right. I had a nephew who busted out of school and didn't have a job. And my mother said, "Look, there are only two acceptable things for a human being to do between the ages of 6 and 66, and that is to have a job or be in training for a job." Now, I didn't want to use those numbers because I didn't want to get a bunch of devil-worship calls about, you know, 6-6-6. So, I just arbitrarily changed the spread to 5-65.

Look, there's nothing that makes a statement about us as a people more than our national government, and that government should tell people that acquiring a job and performing labor is sacred and important. That government should provide the tools that we need to perform.

PLAYBOY: And the Republican answer to that is: You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.

CARVILLE: I know that. And I agree. But you ought to keep the pond full for the horses that want to drink. And we ought to tell everyone where the pond is. And if they don't want to drink, well, then we deal with that.

PLAYBOY: One of the things you talk about a lot is "a national sense of purpose." After he was elected, President Kennedy gave us a sense of purpose when he challenged us to get to the moon, thereby starting the space program. Why can't we have a president who will do something like that again?

CARVILLE: I hate to be a Johnny-one-note here, but if the economy were growing at four or five percent instead of two or three percent the past 30 years, maybe we could do that.

PLAYBOY: But what comes first, the chicken or the egg? Maybe we could stimulate growth by investing in something like the space program.

CARVILLE: I think there's a widely held belief among Americans that we just can't afford those kinds of undertakings right now. We still have NASA and some remnants of the space program, but it's certainly scaled back.

I like the space program. In my formative years, I felt proud to be an American because of it. I watched *The Right Stuff*—and actually read the book. I think John Glenn is an unbelievable hero. I loved Apollo 13. Realistically, though, I just don't think we're in a position to do much at this time.

PLAYBOY: So how would you like to see the future of our country play out?

CARVILLE: If I had my way? I'd like people to be more tolerant. I'd like people to have a greater sense of public responsibility, a greater sense of compassion, a greater sense of taking their lives into their own hands. The clash of ideas is not necessarily a bad thing. I just think we could be more civil about it. The fact is, we tend not to confront the big issues sometimes—the role of federal government, how we deliver health care.

In a democracy, particularly a democracy as mature and as great as this one, we ought to take the time.

PLAYBOY: All of that sounds wonderful, but how do we get there? And how do you and President Clinton plan to play a part in it?

CARVILLE: I'd like to see the number of children growing up in two-parent families increase by 20 percent in the next 15 years. I'd like to see a significant expansion in educational opportunities for everybody, which would lead to a wage growth in real terms of one and a half percent a year. As modest as that sounds, it would take care of more problems than any of us can imagine.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying that just those two accomplishments would satisfy you?

CARVILLE: Yes. Those are my two biggest dreams for America. I'd put up with all the negative commercials, all the congressional bad-mouthing, the special-interest money and anything else I had to tolerate just to get there.

Playboy Interview

JEMELE HILL

A candid conversation with the Emmy-winning writer, thinker, truth-teller and Detroit-er who never could just "stick to sports"

INTERVIEW BY KELLEY L. CARTER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIK CARTER



This past January wasn't the first time white supremacists and Nazi sympathizers overran an American city, bringing chaos and carnage. Those who watched their newsfeeds in abject horror on January 6, 2021 as domestic terrorists swarmed the Capitol might have been reminded of August 12, 2017, when a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia led to violent clashes and a deadly attack that former President Donald Trump would also condone. This was not an aberration, it turns out, but a harbinger of what was to come. Days after Charlottesville, Trump referred to the "very fine people on both sides" of the incident—an equivocation Joe Biden later said catalyzed him to run against Trump. He also reacted sympathetically to the rioters last month.

Of the voices that emerged to help the country contextualize and understand the moment, one stood out for its clarity and courage.

"Donald Trump is a white supremacist who has largely surrounded himself with other white supremacists," tweeted reporter Jemele Hill.

Then co-anchor of ESPN's SportsCenter, Hill had said what many Americans knew to be true. But as so often happens, speaking truth to power came at a price, altering the course of her life and career.

If you're a sports fanatic, you already knew Hill. A fixture in sports journalism, she had written for the Detroit Free Press, Orlando Sentinel and Raleigh News & Observer before joining ESPN in 2006. For nearly 12 years she worked various sports beats across ESPN properties and climbed steadily up the ladder as a columnist for ESPN.com, as a commentator on shows including Cold Pizza, First Take, Outside the Lines and The Sports Reporters, as the founder and co-host of the His & Hers podcast with fellow sports reporter Michael Smith. And then in February 2017 she landed what should've been a dream gig: the co-anchor spot on SportsCenter.

But when her Twitter observation went viral less than eight months into the job, Hill was thrust outside the sports world and into the national spotlight. Trump, never one to let a personal grievance slide, lambasted the network and demanded an apology. White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders called Hill's comment a "fireable offense," while legions of other Trump supporters took to social media to hurl racism, misogyny and death threats at Hill.

Sports, often seen as a respite from politics, was proved once again to be inextricably linked to it. In the era of Colin Kaepernick, "shut up and dribble" and athletes refusing to meet the president, there can be no divorcing the two. In spite of this, Hill remained remarkably unruffled, though she ultimately decided to leave SportsCenter to pursue projects that would soon raise her profile even further.

As impactful as it was, that seismic tweet is perhaps the least interesting thing about Hill. Born in Detroit in 1975, Hill was

raised largely by her mother, her father's long absence and eventual reemergence caused Hill no small amount of anger—though she learned to turn that frustration into strength. As a student at Samuel C. Mumford High School, she discovered a passion for sportswriting, and her ambition and talent for it took her to Michigan State University's journalism program. Hill, never shy about her hometown pride, is an especially proud alum of Michigan State—perhaps in part because it was at a 2014 alumni event that Hill met her now husband, Ian Wallace, whom she married in late 2019.

Though the tweet heard 'round the world put her on the global map, Hill quickly broke out of being defined by it, making calculated professional moves with the steeliness and sensibility of the ballplayers she often covers. Since leaving ESPN in 2018, she has landed a new gig at The Atlantic, narrated a documentary produced by LeBron James, started a successful podcast on Spotify, launched a weekly late night show on Vice TV, signed a development deal with Showtime and written an upcoming memoir.

In other words, she has a lot going on. Which made us ask: Who better to interview Hill than someone with the inside edge? To take on the task of peeling back the many layers of Jemele Hill, Playboy asked the uniquely qualified Kelley L. Carter—an Emmy-winning writer who not only has known Hill since their days as MSU students, but also is her best friend and business partner. Carter reports from Los Angeles, where she invited Hill to her home for the interview (they're in each other's bubbles): "When I met Hill we were both teens, wide-eyed but laser focused on becoming game-changing journalists. We were obsessed with the work of renowned black journalists like the Chicago Tribune's Clarence Page or The Washington Post's Donna Britt. Jemele would devour their pieces, perhaps inspired by the unflinching way they just told it like it was."

"Ours is a Black Lucy and Ethel type of relationship. She's the rabble rouser who is always in search of an adventure; I follow along because I know wherever we're going, we're going to have a good ass time."

"She's the epitome of cool, peppering her shoot from the hip style of conversation with colorfully inventive four-letter word combos. She's compassionate, generous and an exceptional listener—except when it comes to talking her out of something she's set on doing."

"And there is nothing that scares her. Well, almost nothing."

PLAYBOY: We realized the other day that we've been BFFs for nearly 30 years. Are you jittery about this interview?

HILL: It is a little nerve-racking to be interviewed by somebody who knows you so well. So, I got this vodka because I'm nervous.

PLAYBOY: I understand. But you want me to be unedited, right?

HILL: I do.



PLAYBOY: Back when you were a columnist for the student newspaper at Michigan State, your pieces generated a lot of hate mail. Were you ever scared?

HILL: I remember a column I wrote about how reverse racism didn't exist. A dude called the newspaper office; they transferred him right over to my desk. He said, "I read your column" and starts going off. I'm like, "Okay, okay," since we're taught to defuse in those situations. And then he was like, "I expect a full retraction."

That's when the Detroit came out. I'm like, "And what if you don't get it? What are you going to do?" He was like, "You're going to see me somewhere when you least expect it," and hung up the phone. That's when the lightbulb went off. Oh, these people all know me, but I have no idea who they are. More than likely he was in my class. Who knows? But that was when I realized you can trigger people to the point where they are willing to threaten your life, if not take it.

None of that ever made me—not one time—think, Oh, I need to write softer. I need to change my perspective. I need to not write about race. It actually had the opposite effect. It made me want to write about it more. "Okay, let me really piss you off." Y'all not going to shut me up. It's not going to happen. I'm the one with the pen, I'm going to get the last word.

PLAYBOY: The first time you were on ESPN's Cold Pizza in 2007, you closed out the week wearing a T-shirt from your alma mater, Mumford High School—the same shirt Eddie Murphy wore in Beverly Hills Cop.

HILL: I did wear the T-shirt and a Detroit Tigers jersey.

PLAYBOY: Why was that important to you?

HILL: As my platform became more elevated, I needed to show people that good things come from Detroit. I grew up in a city where there was always this idea that people could expect only the worst. Detroit made the national news for almost exclusively awful things: murder rate, Devil's Night, crime, drugs. I got tired of that being the narrative.

There's a grit and a soul to Detroit you won't find elsewhere. I think that has to do with the fact that people there are used to being discounted and disrespected and, frankly, told they're not worthy. Because people look down on the city, it was important to me—especially being on ESPN—to shine that sliver of a spotlight and represent my high school.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of high school, let's talk about growing up. I remember a conversation years ago in New York, you jokingly said something like, "You can tell I didn't grow up with a positive male figure in my life!" Tell me about when you met your dad and how that affected you.

HILL: My mother and father had a volatile relationship. There was abuse, physical and verbal. My mother left him, and my father sunk deeper into drug culture. But even when he was knee-deep in drugs—he got addicted to heroin—my mother would still make a

point to try to keep me connected to his side of the family.

I saw my grandparents, cousins and some uncles, but my father was absent. Just MIA. During that time my mother got married, so my first memories of a positive Black male figure were of my stepfather, my mother's first husband. For a period I thought he was my biological dad. But after my father got clean, he started coming around, I was nine or 10 years old.

PLAYBOY: There was a moment when you answered the door, he was there and he had to explain to you who he was, right?

HILL: It was very awkward. I did not know how to fit him into my life. It was just like, where's this person supposed to go? He would show up for certain things. He came to some of my softball games, we went to the movies, he bought me things. But the emotional connection was missing, and I didn't know how to make up for it. Then, as I learned about things that happened between him and my mother, the anger started. I wasn't sure if I wanted a relationship. I had to really sit with it, and I wrote him a letter when I was living

in Raleigh, North Carolina, working at the News & Observer.

PLAYBOY: How old were you when you were working for the paper in Raleigh?

HILL: Yeah. I wrote him a letter and went off. It was just like, you had a lot of nerve just to try. My father was never demanding, but I thought he never really took responsibility for not being there. Me and my mother had a lot of struggles, and he could not be relied on. She was battling her own substance abuse issues, and when our house got foreclosed on, where was my father?

I had to resolve that those moments were over. I needed to move past it—not for him, but for me. I didn't want it to be something I'd always be sensitive about that's always going to trigger me. The best thing I could do is accept him for who and what he is—shortcomings and all. And I did that. Once I got it off my chest, I was good.

PLAYBOY: Writing feels like your most powerful tool. That had to feel very therapeutic.

HILL: It did. Writing has always been important to me because in person I can struggle to tell people how I feel. I think too much, and I brew, and I stew, and I turn things over in my mind to the point where, verbally, I'm not the best communicator with certain topics. With the more volatile emotions, be it love or anger, I'm very stunted in that way. I'm going to struggle to tell you those feelings. I can easily express myself in writing in ways I can't in conversation. Growing up, I always kept journals because it was the best way to stay in touch with my feelings and get that shit out.

PLAYBOY: Do you think the fractured relationship with your dad impacted how you relate to Black men?

HILL: It's funny you say that because I have noted the fact that he's a recovering addict in previous interviews. He has been clean and sober for decades now, which I also often note. Yet there is this narrative that I hate Black men because of my father, which I find

to be weirdly weaponized.

I didn't ever look at my father and say, "Well, all Black men ain't shit because of what my daddy did." If anything, it helped me give Black men even more grace because I had learned to accept somebody for who they are. It's understanding that he dealt with a very serious addiction, and the way he picked himself back up was not easy to do. I have much more grace because I lived through that experience. I don't look at all Black men and see somebody who will ultimately disappoint me—not at all. Otherwise, I would not have married a Black man.

PLAYBOY: You seemed to be having the most fun when you and Michael Smith (who would later be your co-host on SportsCenter) were doing His & Hers on ESPN2 in 2015 and 2016. Why do you think that was?

HILL: Sometimes you don't know you're having the best time of your life until it's over. We did, and I mean this in the most complimentary way—some of the stupidest things ever seen on television. It was great. It felt like we were left home alone and the parents were on vacation and had no idea we were throwing a massive party. There's a level of fearlessness that we

had. We really didn't care what the executives thought about it.

And luckily for us, they weren't thinking about us because they weren't watching us. We were able to get away with a lot on ESPN2. Because of our authenticity, a His & Hers community had developed. The people really fucked with us because we were not

afraid to do certain things, talk about certain things. People get caught up in all the silly shit we did that was a lot of fun, but we had groundbreaking conversations on the network.

The conversations we had about Trayvon Martin, about Philando Castile, nobody had on the network. And we'd talk about it as long as we wanted. Our conversation after what happened to Philando Castile was 15 minutes—you're not supposed to do that.

PLAYBOY: That's a long time on TV.

HILL: You can't do that on TV! **PLAYBOY:** When you were negotiating a new contract in 2017, you and Smith both had a chance to exit and go to another network. But ESPN came back with a strong offer—one you hadn't considered before: to anchor

the six o'clock SportsCenter. What made you stay?

HILL: They came stronger than either of us anticipated. And the weird part was, it was the easiest contract negotiation I ever had.

"I can only worry about other people's opinions so much. They don't take up a lot of real estate in my mind—none of them write any check that I cash."



Don't Just *Look* Hot

Tips & Tricks To Getting
Famous & How To Cut
the BS!



Originally from Toronto, Canada, Zack Teperman now finds himself back and forth between Los Angeles, California and Nashville, Tennessee, where he is the President of ZTPR, a massive public relations firm that represents all types of people, including some of our very own Paymates! During his rise in the public relations industry, Teperman has had to deal with all types of personalities, while also navigating his way through Hefner's famous Playboy Mansion in Hollywood several times making sure his clients didn't do anything too regretful or get photographed wrong.

From unauthorized leaked sex tape scandals to shaking hands and hanging out with folks like Kim Kardashian, Megan Fox and Miley Cyrus and all our favorite Paymates, Teperman and his team have been around it all. Oh, and he also recently wrote the best selling book called Cut The B.S. A Guide To Getting Yourself Out There, Somewhere.

Teperman cut the BS with Playboy as we asked him about some of these scandals and more + how anyone can go from being an average Joe to famous, even while dealing with the COVID pandemic!

Let's cut the BS right away... Is Hollywood as crazy as everyone says it is? Hollywood and the people that live there are 100% very unique, and for good reason. While you have typical types of businesses, a lot of people "moving to Hollywood" are wanting to get involved in some way in the entertainment industry, and so you have a lot of creative types of personalities. And with creative types, personality levels are at an all-time high - it makes for some good stories! However, I love 'crazy'. Crazy to me means that someone is driven in their pursuit and open minded to ideas. As a publicist, working with people who come to me with ideas and outside-of-the-box thinking is an added asset. Of course, just like in any town, sometimes personalities don't mesh well and sometimes the Hollywood spotlight (or failures, rejection) can really do a number on people mentally, and a lot of "acting out" occurs.

So, can anyone be famous? Depends on your definition of famous, but in short, yes, anyone can be known and talked about. It just depends if that person is looking for a quick 15 minutes of fame or something that is long lasting. It used to be funny watching all these wanna-be models at the Playboy Mansion try so hard to get "famous" and thinking just cause they are flirting with a celebrity, it'll make them famous too; Big difference between being famous and attention seeking.

What is something wild you have witnessed first-hand with a client? I've gotten calls at 3AM from police stations. I've had to file lawsuits on behalf of clients who wanted to sue someone for stealing their pet chicken (no joke!), to seeing bar fights and windows smashed at hotels after a night of partying. Nothing really surprises me these days. Dealing with all types of people has really helped me to be more creative also in the ways I handle certain situations overall in life.

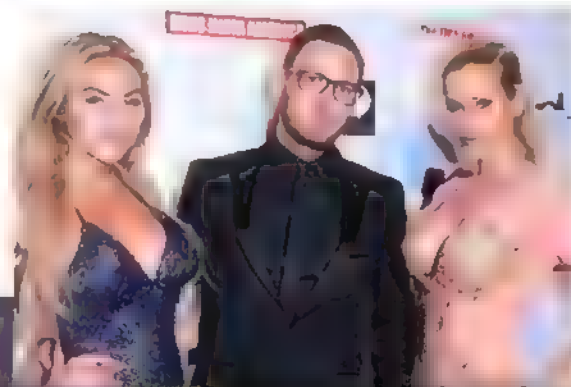
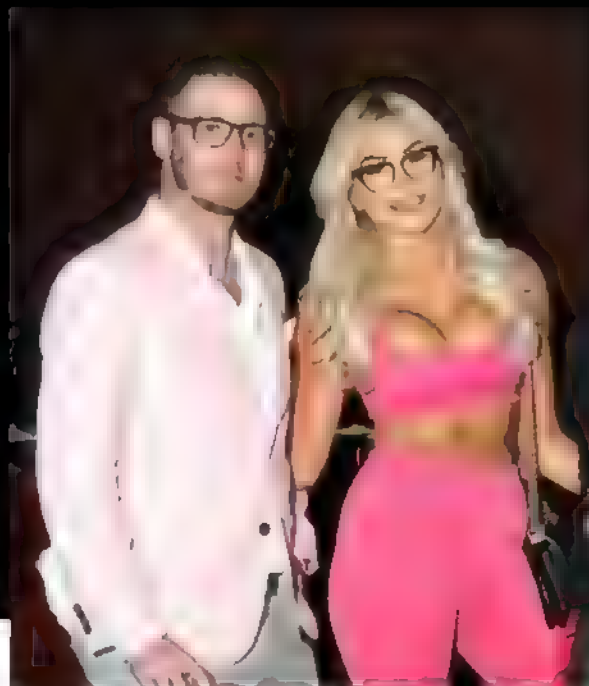
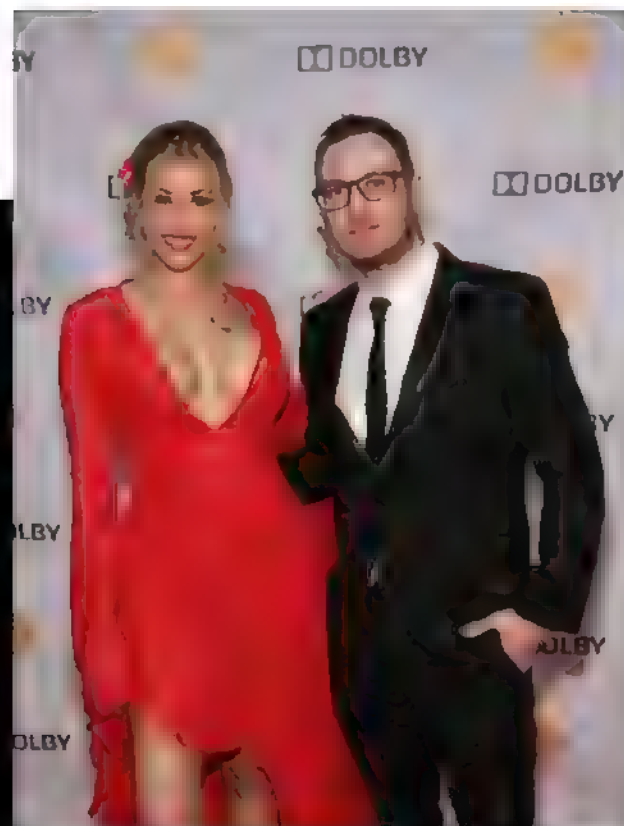
"There's no such thing as bad publicity", right? Honestly, this statement is used a lot in the PR world, but it's not entirely true, unless your only objective is notoriety. Although most business owners and people in other professions such as lawyers, doctors, designers, athletes, musicians and actors would agree that visibility and brand recognition are common goals, being able to have and maintain a positive public reputation is more important. With the internet, stuff stays around forever, and so bad press can really hurt you down the line. That's why it is important to properly and strategically plan what attention you get, rather than just getting naked and running down a street yelling "look at me! look at me!"

You have dealt with clients who have had nude photos leaked. Have been arrested at airports while drunk. And even seen some of your top music clients have insanely wild nights out on the town. How do you manage this and try to minimize negative exposure when negative things do pop up? It's all about pre-planning the best you can and knowing what may be coming before it does. With photos, we always ask clients if there is a chance that exes or people may have copies, so that we can properly have a response ready in case someone is trying to be sleazy and make a quick buck down the road. And when it comes to arrests or wild nights out, the best we can do is get ahead of any media stories so that we can either put out a proper statement or get it not published. That goes back to crisis management and trying to best spin whatever we can.

So, you guys in PR are spin doctors? PR is all about getting stories told, and putting the proper spin on anything we do. So essentially, yes, we can be seen as 'spin doctors'. People hire us so that we can get them the proper exposure to get themselves or products or services out there in

a way that draws people in. If something bad happens, we have to look at the overall picture and figure out a way to spin it in a way that won't hurt whatever we are doing on behalf of that individual or business. And trust me, it's not as easy as it may sound!

What advice would you give to people to help get themselves out there more? Think outside of the box! What makes you different from the person next to you?! Figure out what you want to be branded as, be seen as, and use whatever tools you have (such as social media) to promote that "image". The key is to set yourself apart and allow people to see you and what you have to offer. Plus, when it is safe again, go out and network at events. Meeting people, talking, getting yourself out there and mingling with the proper crowds is a quick way to expand your reach. In the meantime, don't be afraid to try networking with people you look up to in your industry. Hit them up on social media or via email and ask for advice. Many celebs or high profile business people used to be in your same position, and would be happy to respond back. Heck, I even randomly sent a letter to Tom Hanks asking for





parental advice, and he responded a few weeks later in a 2 page letter. Anything is possible'

Does PR really work? I always say, you can be the best looking model, best actor, best singer, have the best product, etc., but if nobody knows about you and your product, or service isn't getting people's attention, is it really the best?! That is where PR comes into play. We help strategize with you your ultimate goals and the stepping stones we need to take to get you where you want to go. Plus, we have the contacts, relationships and connections to get you that exposure, whereas if you just email someone yourself, it may not get answered. PR is an investment in yourself... so, it's up to you if you believe in yourself.

Follow Zack on Instagram @zackteperman for more news and tips on how to get yourself noticed by the right people in the industry!



SEX APPEAL *with*
**TASHA
WOOD**

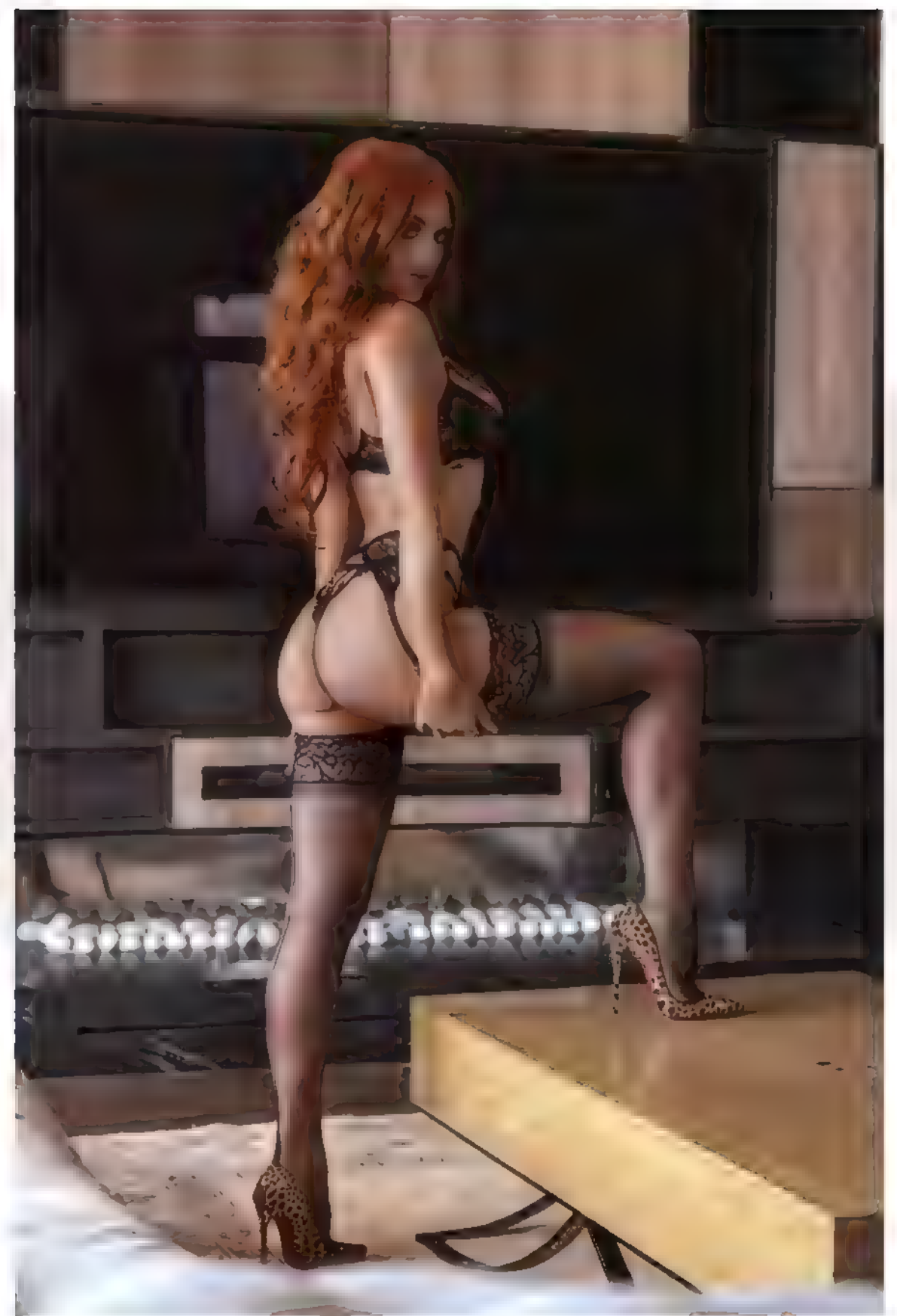
Instagram @_tashawood_

This month we get candid
and drop-dead gorgeous Ta-
sha Wood. Here, she shares
what she loves to do for fun, what
she looks for in a guy and
where she finds the inspira-
tion to build her business
empire! Take a look!

Photography by Rocky Batchelor | @rockybatchelor
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“ I LIVE BY THE
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Hi Tasha, thanks for taking the time to talk to us. Firstly, you look amazing. Could you tell our readers a little bit about yourself, where you're from, and what you love to do for fun when you're not working? Hi, thanks so much. I'm so excited to be on the cover this month, normally I'm working behind the scenes grooming the models.

I'm a professional dancer and a solo teach various styles at KM Studios. I have my own Makeup & Lash Artistry business on the Gold Coast where I've been living for about 12 years after moving up from Sydney. For fun I love to catch up with my gas for some dinner and drinks... maybe a cheeky dance out afterwards! I also dance most nights of the week when I'm not teaching and love to fit in a pole dancing class where I can!

It's sexy to see a gorgeous and strong woman making big moves. Could you tell us more about your beauty business Tasha Wood Beauty and what made you decide to go into business? Aw, thank you! I've always had a strong interest in makeup and everything beauty, my family always encouraged me to do something I loved for work and makeup was definitely a passion along with dancing! I love to make people feel good and confident about themselves which both my jobs do. I love having control of how I run my business and the service I can provide to clients which is why I choose to work for myself.

You're dripping with sex appeal and you're a dance teacher, that's hot. Most of your dance revolves around Commercial Jazz, dancing in heels, and twerking. Could you share what it's like to work as a teacher for KM Studios and what are some of your plans to expand your own business in the future? You're too sweet, I definitely have a pretty good job! I love that the studio is about empowering people, making them feel sexy, and expressing that in a safe space with no judgment! Kristie our owner is amazing, she's always inspired us to grow and develop our skills. I'm pretty happy working under KM Studios right now but you never know what the future may hold!

What inspires your creativity and who are some of your role models in the industry? To be honest, some

days are good and some days are bad, but when I'm feeling happy, confident, and in the zone, I'm definitely at my creative peak. I have a relaxing spot by the water overlooking the Surfers Paradise skyline that I love to sit at and work or just chill out at and reset, that pace helps me have a clear mind to find my inspiration. Running a business isn't easy, I think it's important to keep it real. I live by the line 'Everything happens for a reason, good and bad' there's a lesson behind everything. As for role models, I am impressed by people who are true to themselves and show kindness to others.

Being good-looking, do you ever get random texts in your inbox and how do you respond to those random messages or do you just do the usual and ignore them? I do, I'm guilty of checking out a profile and if they're my type I definitely reply! If they sound a bit creepy then they get the block and delete.

Another random question, have you ever sent a direct message to a guy and how did they respond? Honestly, I'm really not that forward when it comes to messaging first, I'm definitely the type of girl you need to message first. Maybe something to work on for 2022 haha!

It's no secret, gorgeous girls get all the attention. What are some of the best, and worst dates you've been on, and if you could arrange an ideal date, what would it be and where? Yesss, we love a bit of attention but only from the right person! The best date I've been on would've been with this lovely guy, he was very romantic and charming. It was like I didn't need to ask he already knew. The worst date was with this guy that talked about himself the entire time, don't get me wrong I'd love to hear about your life but I'd want you to also be interested in me and what I do!

My ideal date would be anything that has effort behind it, surprise me with a cute lookout or picnic on the beach! It doesn't need to be expensive, effort over money.

Speaking of guys, do you have a type. Do you prefer the clever nerdy guy or are you more into the rough bad boy type of guy? I mean I don't mind either, probably lean towards the bad boy type! So long

as I'm physically attracted to them and they are respectful, caring, and loving. I'm happy! I would want to be with someone that gives as much to me as I do to them. Can we get a mix between both haha?

Do you have a celebrity crush or has that become too cliché? On Michael B Jordan, that man is fineeee AF.

Dating has become very hard with Covid and social distancing. Do you think guys sending random DMs is an acceptable way to find a partner online is the good old-fashioned meet-cute still the best way to find real romance? I don't think real romance is dead yet, Covid's an obstacle for sure but there's ways around it.

You got some really spectacular pictures on Instagram, looks like you travel a lot. What are some of the best places you've been to and what is your most memorable travel moment? Definitely, both Dubai and Bali were a highlight for me. Dubai was crazy no building is the same. Bali was a so really fun and adventurous, most of my traveling was from when I was younger. I'd love to do some more trips in the next few years with my friends and experience more amazing places! I definitely want to visit Greece, Maldives, Japan and New York just to name a few.

Where can our readers get more information about your beauty services, to book dance classes, or to keep up with your latest news and upcoming events? My business Instagram for Makeup & Lashes is @tashawoodbeauty. All bookings can be made easily online otherwise for non-business content you can find me @tashawood_ and on Tiktok @tasha_wood_. KM Studios can also be booked online via their Instagram @KMstudios with various classes and teachers to choose from!

If you have any last words we'd love you to share, otherwise, it was a real pleasure speaking to you and we hope to see you again... Thank you so much, it's been a pleasure chatting to you! I hope to see you again.





“ I DON'T THINK
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20

Kehlani

In the lead-up to her new release, the soul-baring singer opens up to *Playboy* about playing with gender, finding new joy in songwriting, and how "being a mom is the sexiest thing ever."

BY GERRICK D. KENNEDY PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIANNA ALYSSE

Kehlani has never been afraid to reveal herself. Her joys, fears, triumphs and mistakes have stood front and center in her music since the beginning of her ascent to stardom. And that emotional intimacy, in all its heart-on-the-sleeve glory, stretches into her personality. Anyone who follows the 25-year-old singer-songwriter online (14 million people between her Twitter and Instagram, to be exact) knows Kehlani gives it to you straight, no chaser—whether it's riffing on her day or responding to a bully or a rumor about her life. If modern celebrity is a balancing act between being accessible and remaining enigmatic, Kehlani has succeeded by opting for warts-and-all transparency instead of carefully curated moods.

In just a few short years, the Oakland native has become one of pop's most vital voices, winning fans with optimistic meditations on romantic desire, anguish, self-love, sexual fluidity, spirituality and mental wellness. But it was a bumpy journey: Kehlani's father died when she was an infant, her mom was in and out of jail while struggling with addiction, and she was placed in foster care before her aunt adopted her. The nation first met Kehlani as a wide-eyed teenager on America's Got Talent in 2011, when she was in an eclectic cover band hoping to catch a break. The group placed fourth in the competition, and judge Piers Morgan rightly noted that she'd be better off solo. But reality show platitudes don't mean much to a hungry teen with a dream, and Kehlani shouldered through shady industry deals and homelessness before AGT host Nick Cannon became a mentor, helping put a roof over her head and funding the studio time that allowed

Kehlani to record her first mixtape, 2014's *Cloud 19*.

With her sweet, bubbly tunes that toed the line between frothy pop and buttery R&B, Kehlani made the kind of music that reminded us why we first fell in love with Whitney, Mariah and Brandy back in the day. Her 2015 mixtape, *You Should Be Here*, broke her to mainstream audiences, and a record deal with Atlantic and a Grammy nomination added to her rising stock in the industry. But as Kehlani's star ascended, the spotlight on her personal life intensified. She was one of a few queer women in pop music, and her romantic relationships and preference for unrestrained vulnerability became fodder for online bullies.

All the hate and negativity Kehlani encountered online added to the pressures she felt ahead of her major label debut, 2017's *SweetSexySavage*, a collection of vibrant pop and R&B she made while trying to get her head on straight.

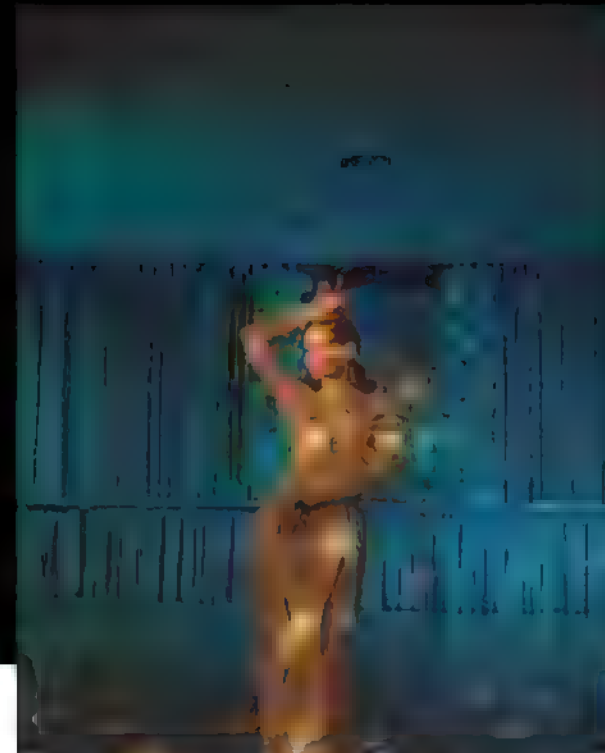
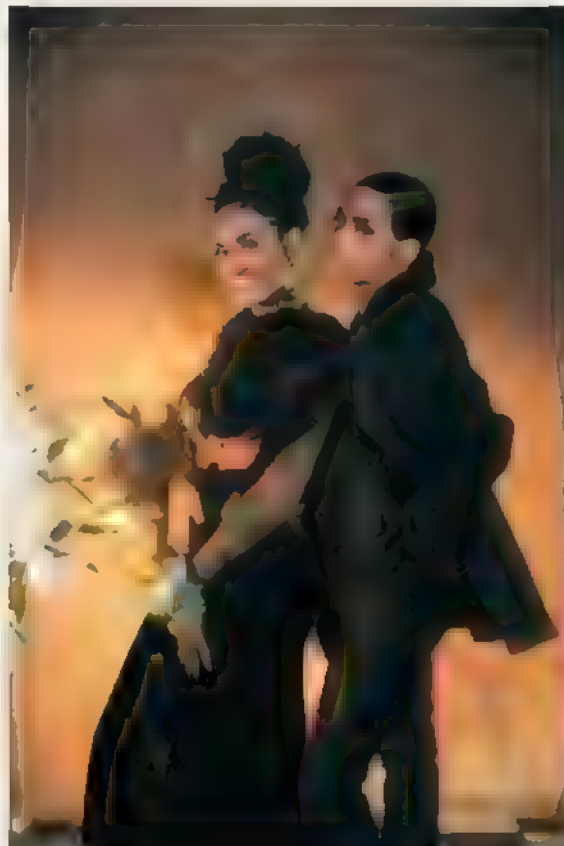
And then came last year's *It Was Good Until It Wasn't*, a deeply personal album that showed her examining relationships and processing her feelings without the positivity afforded by youthful insouciance. She was a mother now—her daughter Adeya Nomu was born in 2019—and she was ready to do some alchemy on herself. *It Was Good Until It Wasn't* perfectly summed up where she was at the time: Her heart was filled with grief. The messy unraveling of her relationship with rapper YG was playing out on the blogs, and she was reeling from the

tragic loss of close friends Chynna Rogers and Lexi Aljai, rising rappers who passed away three months apart (the album ends with a verse from Aljai).

It's the kind of heaviness that usually pushes an artist to make their most poignant work, and Kehlani was no exception. *It Was Good Until It Wasn't* was her most personal and successful project to date, speaking not only to how damn good the record is (many critics put it on their year-end lists, and it hit number one on the Billboard R&B charts), but also to Kehlani's bold decision to release it by tackling the creative promotion from her garage (with the blessing of her label) just as Covid-19 was upending the world. Maybe you, too, were stuck inside, sitting in your feels as a pandemic left folks lonely, afraid and detached from all we knew—and here came an album that made space for all of the languishing and homesickness and, ultimately, the healing that comes after loss.

Ultimately, the healing that comes after loss.

Nearly a year after the album's release, Kehlani has found a peace that once seemed impossible. The world is still fucked up, but she's at joy in a way that is immediately apparent when her warm giggle echoes through my phone. She's calling from her home in Simi Valley, which she bought during the pandemic out of a desire to escape the noise of Los Angeles and build a commune for her tribe. Hearing the gleeful energy coming out of her nearly two-year-old daughter in the background, I can't help but feel a sense of pride thinking about how far she has come from when I first met her in 2017. She's gotten out of the darkness



that has clouded her for so long and is recording new music from a place of newfound happiness. Though she's tight-lipped about what shape the new music she's working on will take (A mixtape? An EP? An album?), Kehlani is certain it's the best music she's made yet. And as usual, she's ready to reveal all.

Q1: *It Was Good Until It Wasn't* was one of 2020's most critically acclaimed



albums What sort of impact has that had on you? It really showed me a lot about my ability to create in times when we were told we wouldn't know what was going on. We don't know when the album can come out, and we don't know about videos. It showed me that I can create in my backyard. I can create in my garage. My music can reach these levels that are critically acclaimed, with people being really shocked—like, “Whoa, she really did create value.” [It Was Good] pushed me to a huge limit, and that showed me more about myself, and more about my art. More than even the critical acclaimed-ness.

Q2: Do you feel pressure to constantly create and release music? People always want more. They consume at such a high rate. I fully understand that, so the only pressure I can apply is self-imposed. I'm blessed to be able to make so much music. Anybody who knows me knows that work is what I love to do. If I'm not at the studio, I'm home, completely focused on my baby. Then she comes with me to the studio. I don't feel outside pressure to create and release, I just love creating and releasing.

Q3: Much of your work has been created as you went through personal heaviness. What is inspiring the next Kehlani project? I've always got something up my sleeve. I have taken this opportunity during quarantine to go extremely inward, cracking down on my spiritual journey and spiritual self and enforcing boundaries I never had. I have a therapist, finally, who I absolutely love, and I have a routine of getting up and praying. I'm in this consistent, deep connection inwardly that I don't feel like I've ever had, I thought I had it. When you're a spiritual person and you finally find the real, deep route to commit to, you always end up being like, “Oh, I really thought I was doing the work before.”

Now that I'm really doing the work, I'm like, “Oh, man, I was just carrying a bunch of crystals in my pockets.” The new music I've been making is just a reflection of a healthy self, healthy love for the self, healthy love with spirit, healthy love—healthy everything around me. [The music] sounds really refreshing. It feels really refreshing. It feels grown.

Q4: How has your approach to songwriting shifted? In the beginning of my career it was very, “I have to keep the lessons. I have to push the self love, push the young kid coming up and they can't tell me shit.” I went through all the phases. It was like, coming of age love songs. And then it was young girl empowerment. And then It Was Good Until It Wasn't came, and I finally learned how to write with some depth about sadder things. I always wrote my way out of sadness with uplifting angles, but It Was Good Until It Wasn't taught me to alchemize my sorrow. The new music is not sad. I'm just not sad. I don't feel sorrow. I've been very blessed for this period of time—which could've gone a whole different way for me—to actually have taken me in a very positive direction. I don't take that lightly for one moment,

because it's a really crazy time. It's honestly a very privileged thing to even be able to speak about the pandemic in this light.

Q5: Your fans have such an intense connection with your music. How do you balance their expectations with your creative desires? I just try to remember that, at the end of the day, I'm the only one left to face my own decisions, and self-betrayal feels way worse than disapproval from strangers. I could completely betray myself and make things my fans are obsessed with. Meanwhile, I'm over here itching to try new styles, itching to try new things. If I just put out what they want me to, then at the end of the day I'm going to feel worse because I'm going to be haunted by that. So I'd rather bite the bullet and put something out there. I was really excited to make. Those who are meant to love it will find it. Some of my favorite songs I've ever written—a lot of my core younger fans who might have come to me for the mainstream R&B songs didn't understand them. Fast forward a couple years and they're like, “Okay, I get ‘Butterfly’ now. I love ‘Butterfly.’” People who get it will get it. People who don't, don't.

Q6: What do you do when you feel stuck creatively? You can't force it. Art is an alchemy and a medium shift, and you don't force a medium shift. If you're sitting at your altar and nothing's coming up for you, you don't force the spirits to talk. You might leave an offering. You might say a prayer. You might light a candle. You might light some herbs. You don't force the message to come to you, that's just not how it works. So in those times when I feel stuck, I might leave an offering for my art. That means I might go watch a classic film. I might take a walk or take a break and not think about music at all. I might go listen to a style of music I don't normally listen to—something that will feed me rather than force it out of me. I think about it the same way I think about spirits.

Q7: You've talked about leaving L.A. and starting a farm and learning to live off the land. What are some of your favorite foods to cook? Right now, I've been on such a soup kick. I've been trying to be on this no-waste kick. I feel like as passionate as I am about the world and people, it's very hypocritical of me to be a wasteful person while caring this much. I live with a couple people, so we run through things pretty fast. But there always seems to be that time every two weeks when things are about to go bad and we have to cook them. My favorite thing to do is just throw everything—all the vegetables—in a pot with some fucking vegetable broth and whatever spices are calling out to me and make a yummy-ass vegetable soup. It's the best way to eliminate having a big-ass throw-away vegetable pile at the end of the week.

Q8: How did your childhood impact your approach to motherhood? Having my child surrounded by me and her dad, but also so much love from other people, is super important,

“All of a sudden, I got these mom hips. I got this mom sensuality and grown woman attitude and this in touch-ness with my body that I never had before.”



because I always had family around. My aunt raised me, but I also had my cousins and my other aunts and two dogs. They tried to make sure I got lots of social engagement from my family that made me feel full all the time. There was always music playing in the house. At night, when any of us couldn't sleep, we would go take a drive around the lake in Oakland and go see the lights. Or simple things like waking up on Sunday morning and having cartoons and art projects. My aunt was really awesome and super, super, super fun. I'm carrying that into parenthood, knowing that kids don't need perfect parents—they need happy parents. The things we carry with us as adults are memories of joy, so I consciously create joyful moments in the house for her to carry throughout her life.

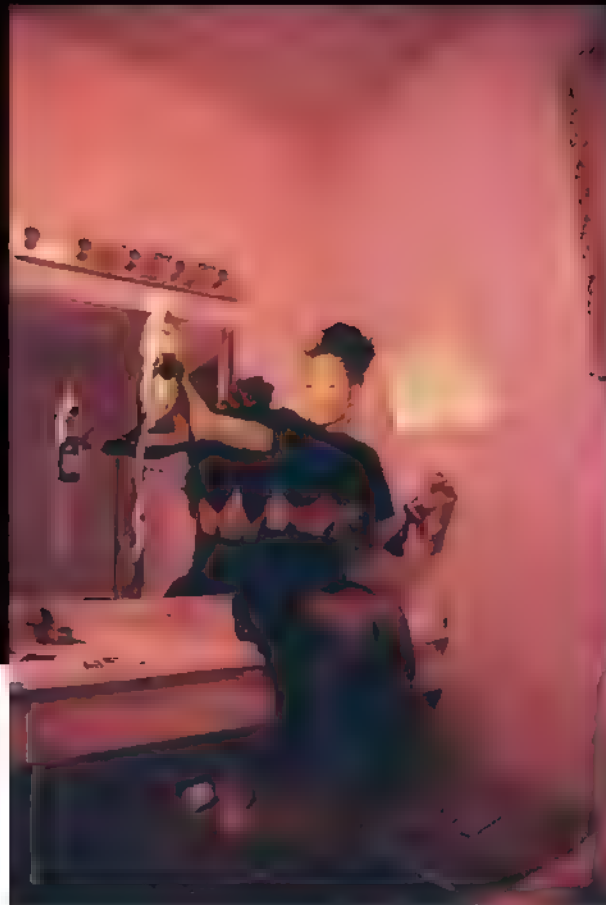
Q9: You have been in the spotlight for almost a third of your life. When have you felt the most trapped professionally? I've always seen such freedom, because I center my freedom. Everybody kind of allows me to do what I do. But back when everything was going on in 2016, I was like, “What if I just want to quit and run away?” And everybody was like, “Nah, you made it this far. You

got to keep going. And you can't let anybody think they got you down so bad that you quit.” As trapped as I felt and as much as I was like, “Fuck this. I hate everyone.” I am really grateful that everyone woke me up to those thoughts and not only pushed me, but also gave me this safety net to let me know I'm never going to fall that hard again. That was the most trapped. But pressure makes diamonds, and you can only have light—true light—after darkness goes.

Q10: What about personally? Personally, the most trapped I've ever felt was probably the cycle of abuse in [a past] relationship. Just feeling like, “I know better, so why can't I do better?” It's this weird, rabbit-hole cycle of, like, “Am I being stupid?” But also, “How do I change things? Can I even change it? Do I have the strength to change this? What do I do?” That's psychologically the cycle of abuse. Once you're out of it or when you're looking from the outside, it seems like it's so simple to get up and leave. But when you're in it, it's a whole other experience.

Q11: How did getting out of those situations shift your outlook on

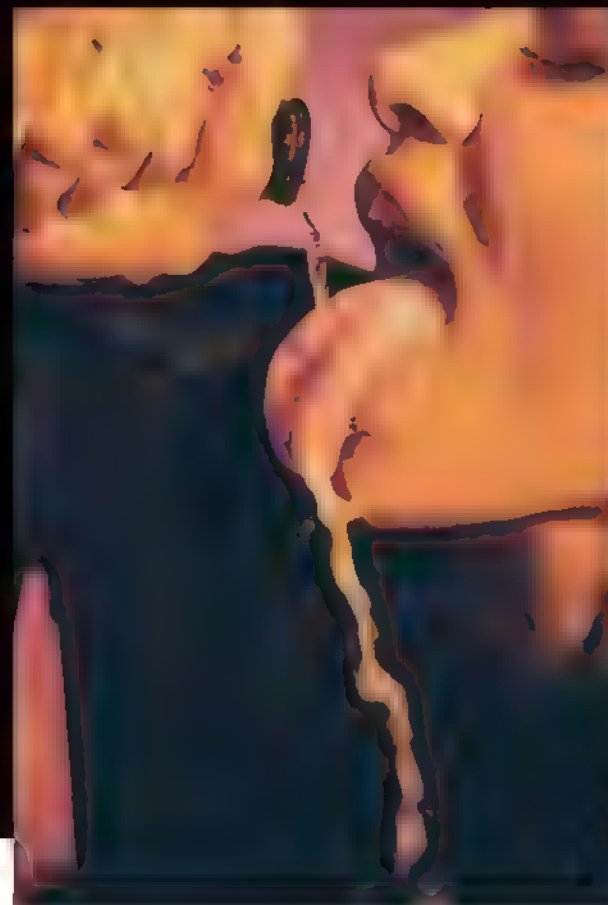




your life and career? It told me I am capable of anything, and my heart is never going to steer me to the wrong place as long as I'm listening to the correct side of it. And things are better on the other side. There is grass waiting for you on the other side, but you have to jump off the porch to get to it. That was a fear that stopped me for a long time. It's like, "I've really got to kick myself off the porch." Now I can leap off the porch. Now I can fly off the porch.

Q12: *You've always been incredibly transparent, but what's something you've never revealed in an interview?* Something I've never revealed in an interview? Hmmmm. I'm currently looking for a doula certification program. The one I'm waiting for is closed until the spring. I'm really anxious to take it, and I'm trying to figure out how to navigate wanting to become a full spectrum doula while being an R&B singer or a singer in general. I should stop limiting myself to the word "R&B." I guess I've also never revealed that I don't consider myself an R&B artist.

Q13: *Which of your records was the most effortless to record?* A moment for me that was so beautiful was "Open (Passionate)." I



I went into the booth and I just kept saying, "Do I got you way too open to be open?" People were like, "Whoa, are you talking about what I think you're talking about?" And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm really trying to make the most beautiful, polyamorous song there is." I'm trying to talk about the technicalities of an open relationship and just fucking be real about how I feel about it. And putting those harmonies together was just super fun.

Q14: *What's the hardest part of fame?* I've had a hard lens on me since I was, like, 13 years old. Everyone you meet has some opinion on you, whether it's, "I don't care for her," "I really care for her," "I don't care to care for her," "I've heard of her," "I think she looks funny." I sometimes can't walk into a room with a fresh slate, and it gives me a little bit of anxiety because I want to be a part of these community based things, and I want to be in these spaces, and I want to participate in things and experience things as a 25 year old girl. I often feel like, "Damn, I'm going to walk in there and it's going to be a thousand different energies sent my way because of people already holding these little pockets of energy for me before they've even met me."

Q15: *What's the easiest?* The easiest part of fame is having the ability to do something important. I've had friends who needed to find [stem cell] donors. They led a campaign and got so many people signed on, but I have the ability to say, "Look, we need a bunch of people to donate their samples and take a swab test



and send it in to be the match," and [get more people to sign on] so a lot of other people can find matches and potential donors. At the press of a button, I can tell millions of people something very important, and they can take part in it if they want to. You can make beautiful things happen really, really quickly

Q16: Define masculinity and femininity for you and what did it take for you to arrive at those definitions? I've discovered that I've run from a lot of femininity. I was way more comfortable in a more masculine space. I feel more masculine when I am in my stillness and I'm grounded in a quiet, contemplative mode. I feel most feminine when I'm being the mother of my house. I also feel my femininity when I take time for self care—when I take really beautiful baths where I throw some flowers in and I do a hair mask and take time oiling my body in the mirror and saying how beautiful I feel. My femininity makes me feel soft and gentle and tender and careful in a different way than my masculinity makes me feel. I'm trying not to let it fall into the gender norms of feminine and masculine, but for me it does a tiny bit. But I also am very fluid in both of those settings

Q17: When do you feel the sexiest? I feel the sexiest when I'm really bare—when I'm taking extra time to oil up after my bath and put essential oils into my shea butter. For me, sexy is very internal. It's in the comfort and the feeling—not when do I look most sexy, but when do I feel scrumptious? When do I feel, like, m"Oh, somebody could just come lick me from my head to my toe right now. That's how fucking good I smell, and that's how moisturized I am." That's when I feel sexy

Q18: How does it feel to be a sex symbol? I hope people know being a mom doesn't make you less sexy. Being a mom is the sexiest thing ever. I think something happened to me when I

became a mom, I just became sexier. I was this quirky little person before—not super in touch with myself, a super tomboy. Then I became a mom, and all of a sudden I got these mom hips. I got this mom sensuality and grown woman attitude and in touch-ness with my body that I never had before. You really fucking get to know your body when you birth. When you get pregnant, you become a fucking universe and a portal. So I think motherhood has made me this insane sex symbol even to myself.

Q19: So many people were telling you about the quarantine sex they were having to songs from *It Was Good Until It Wasn't*. I have to ask, what are some of your go-to sex jams? Oh, this is so funny. I don't like songs with words when I have sex, because I feel it's just the wrong. I don't like people to talk to me too much unless it's really natural. If I hear, p"Whose is it? What's my name? Blah, blah, blah," I'll be like, "Shut up! I don't know why you're doing this. It's uncomfortable." Like, I'm about to fall out of whatever mood I was in. So I like to listen to these lo-fi, beat playlists. They're so nice and it transforms it to a whole other world.

Q20: What does joy look or feel like for you? Joy feels like when you know there's absolutely nothing you would change about a moment and there's nothing you could change to make you any more joyous. Like, m"Even the way the sun is coming through the window while I'm making breakfast, and the way my daughter is stomping around the kitchen cracking up, and this song that's playing is perfect and she's singing along, and my puppy is sunbathing and the plants in the kitchen just got watered so they're flourishing." Every single moment of the day is just perfect.





The Myth of the Home- wrecker

Although it's easy to blame the blame
is disproportionate on women when it
comes to cheating

WRITTEN BY DANA HAMILTON

America is obsessed with homewreckers. From Monica Lewinsky to Angelina Jolie to Jordyn Woods, we have a history of demonizing the (usually single) “other woman.” But why is significantly less blame for the end of a relationship put on the person who actually cheated?

There is so much vitriol for women who “broke up” a marriage. Let’s take Kristen Stewart’s case in 2012, for example in which a celebrity magazine published pictures of her canoodling with then married director Rupert Sanders. It was so explosive, Donald Trump tweeted, “Robert Pattinson should not take back Kristen Stewart. She cheated on him like a dog and will do it again—just watch.” Yet there weren’t tweets talking about the decisions Rupert Sanders made that ultimately led to his divorce. I had to google his name for this article because, like you, I had no recollection of who the hell he was. But that Trump tweet? Infamous.

Although it takes two to tango, the blame is disproportionately put on women when it’s two cheaters in heterosexual relationships. And it’s even worse when it’s a single woman “breaking up” a relationship—even if the “other woman” didn’t know the man she was dating wasn’t single. Homewrecking is an outdated notion—and I’m not really sure it existed in the first place. If a relationship’s foundation was already cracked enough for someone to cheat, there was no home to be wrecked.

About five years ago, the person I was dating slept with his ex. Did I blame the ex with whom he cheated? No. I didn’t know the woman, I didn’t know her story, I didn’t know why she wanted to sleep with the person I was sleeping with and, to be honest, I don’t think she knew he was seeing me. But it doesn’t matter. Even if she did know, I’m not angry at her. I feel sad that she would accurately assess the dude I was dating as someone who lies or someone who didn’t have the balls to break up with me or ask to open up the relationship before sleeping with her so he could be with both of us ethically and still decide he’s good enough for her. C’mon, girl, have higher standards for yourself than that dude.

I recognize that partners aren’t property and being in a relationship doesn’t turn off your attraction to other people. I wish I could say only people in bad relationships cheat, but there are plenty of people in good relationships who cheat too. Self sabotage is a thing, when it comes to homewrecking, sometimes the call is coming from inside the house—from the person who built it.

When I got cheated on, I was angrier at the person I was dating than the person with whom he cheated. Regardless of why it happened, he broke our agreement. She had nothing to do with that. In our mutually agreed upon monogamous dynamic, women could have been throwing themselves at him and it’s still his responsibility not to act on it—or to initiate a conversation with me about opening up our relationship.

So why isn’t more blame placed on a partnered person who engages in a sexual dynamic outside of what they agreed upon? Why is there so little public smearing of people who decided to cheat rather than do the right thing, which is either end things

with their current partner before entering another sexual dynamic or openly communicate about changing the dynamic of their current relationship? Why is the other person—usually a woman—dragged through the mud? Homewrecker is defined as “a person who is blamed for the breakup of a marriage or family, especially due to having engaged in an affair with one member of a couple.” So why have I never heard a man called one?

We became obsessed with figuring out who “Becky with the good hair” was, but where was the public outrage against Jay Z? He cheated on Beyoncé. Do you know what kind of balls it takes to cheat on Beyoncé? Huge. I’m surprised he is able to walk with them, instead of army crawling 24/7. But that dynamic is proof that the “other woman” is almost completely irrelevant to the conversation. If you’re already willing to cheat on Beyoncé, it doesn’t matter if it was Becky

Homewrecker is defined as “a person who is blamed for the breakup of a marriage or family, especially due to having engaged in an affair with one member of a couple.” So why have I never heard a man called one?

or Brenda or Beth—if it weren’t Becky, it was going to be someone else.

There are so many options to mend or get out of a relationship, so the cheating party has very little excuse. If you feel tempted to cheat because you truly want to build a relationship with the person with whom you’re cheating, end things with the other person first. But that’s often not what happens. People want to have their cake and eat it too. There are a lot of reasons people cheat: the thrill of it, seeking out a new person for emotional support or sex, or simply low self-esteem—they choose to fuck up a good thing because, deep down, it’s what they feel they deserve. In all these cases, just, like, go to therapy. If you’re causing harm (self or otherwise) in this facet of your life, you’re probably causing it in other facets too.

If you want to an open relationship and your partner doesn’t, that warrants an honest—albeit uncomfortable—conversation. I know some couples who have periods of openness and closedness as a means of compromise so both parties feel secure and happy. But the responsibility for that conversation lies with the person who desires to be intimate with more than one person. We’re not robots, but we have the power to control our factory settings for the sake of a relationship.





PLAYMATE

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MUA @makeupartist_atlanta
Location @nikitasstripclub







We're happy to have you feature on Playboy! Can you give us a bit of a background on your career as a model and where it all started? I'm so grateful for the opportunity! Thank you for having me. Actually started modeling for my high school boyfriends' mom when I was 15. She had her own boutique, and would model her clothing for her. That's when I fell in love with modeling. Since then, I've done a few runway shows and smaller magazines, as well as just doing shoots for fun.

Having a full schedule must make it difficult for you to get much alone time, talk to us about the top 3 must-dos to ensure you fit in some well-deserved downtime? I live by my planner. Every morning I sit drinking my coffee and planning my day. It's a must to keep everything in order. I also make sure I make time to read a good book and work out. Self-care is really important to me so making sure I plan times to decompress is always a must.

What does it mean for you to be seen as a strong, intelligent, ambitious woman? It means a lot to me. I haven't always been seen as such. I think we've all been through things in life that break us. Believe it's important to learn from any situation you find yourself in and build from there. I've had to really work to prove myself. I want women to know that no matter what life throws at you that they can succeed and do whatever they are passionate about, as long as they put the work in.

What are some of the biggest misconceptions people have about what you do? I think being in the adult industry, not only as a model, but as a feature entertainer, there are major misconceptions that come with the territory. A lot of people look down on you as a woman and think you don't respect yourself, when the fact is we probably respect ourselves more than the average woman because we have control over every aspect of our business and ourselves. Some think this line of work is easy, when that's so far from the truth. It not only takes being comfortable in your own skin, but being a feature takes time, energy, money, and drive. There's so much that goes into each show. You have to plan each one from just an idea then mold it into your vision from the costume and props to the music. Not to mention the cost of traveling and competing, along with any other work we have to do on the side or in our daily lives. It truly is a balancing act and not for the faint of heart.

What does freedom of self-expression mean to you? It means the freedom to be yourself and express your views and beliefs in a way that you feel is best for you. If we were all the same and viewed things the same the world would be a rather boring place.

We absolutely love your Instagram, your content is very dynamic, inspirational, and downright sexy, could you perhaps tell us what your personal experience as an influencer has been like? As an influencer, I'm able to directly connect with my fans from

all over and make connections I may not have been able to otherwise, or at least not as quickly. One thing that I keep hearing from my followers is how they like that I have a variety of content and that it's real. I am very upfront about my life and even on days I'm a hot mess I have support. I want people to realize they don't have to be perfect to get where they want to go in life, that being themselves and hard work is all it takes. I love the fact that I get to meet so many diverse people and interact with them from a platform that brings so many people together.

3 things that you can't go a day without. Well, I've mentioned my planner but that's the big one. Lol. Also, coffee, I'm a nightmare without my caffeine, and of course my phone because I do absolutely everything from it.

What about those crazy DMs you must receive! Care to share a few funny stories regarding those? Oh my so many do. I receive a lot of questionable photos for sure. I get love letters and sexual requests from couples, and I've even been proposed to. I really never know what to expect when I check my inbox.

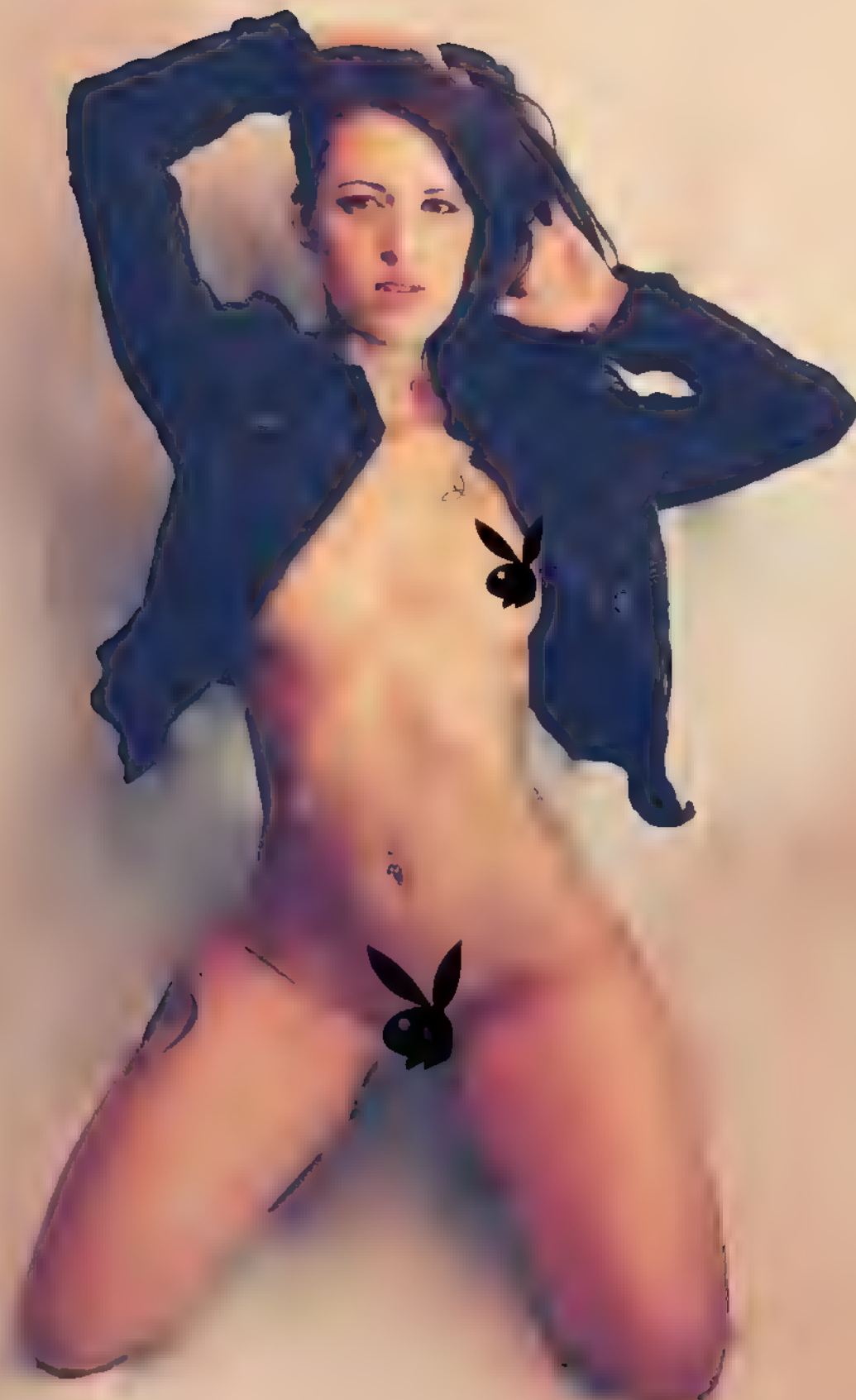
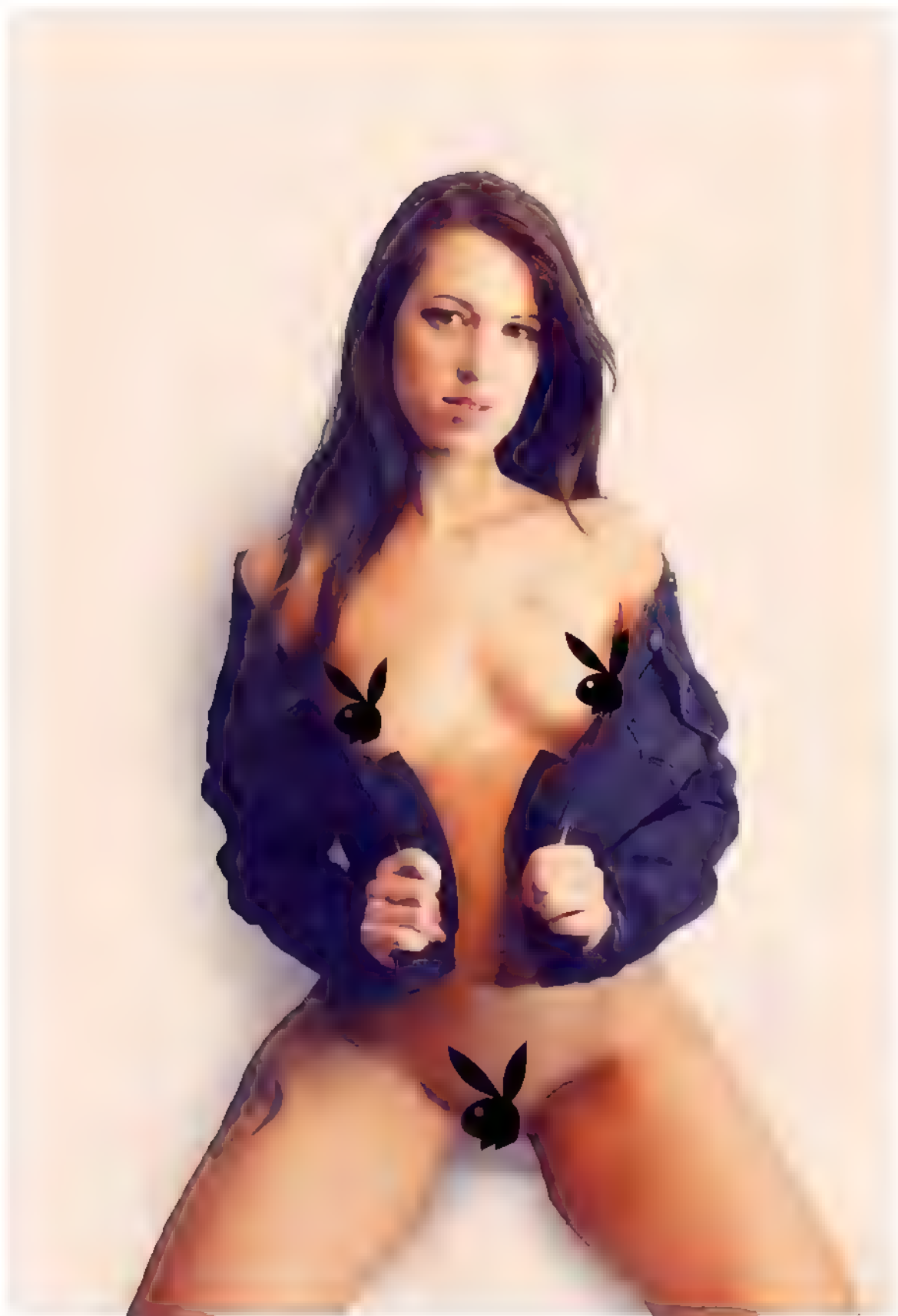
Now we're sure you experience a lot of male attention on and offline, any advice you would like to give to men out there who are hoping to catch your eye the right way? Treat me how you'd want someone to treat your female loved ones. It's so easy for some to forget that we in the industry are women who deserve respect like any other woman working out there.

What is the absolute worst thing a man can do to completely put you off? Act cocky. There's a major difference in confidence and cockiness. I think some men forget that, women as well.

That said, what advice would you have to give to all women out there when it comes to love and relationships. Don't settle and have a firm understanding of yourself and what you want in a partner. Don't be afraid to be a one and work on yourself. The right one will come along when the time is right.

Thank you so much for sitting down with us and letting us get to know you! Any last words for our readers out there? Absolutely! Thank you for having me. To your readers, never stop reaching for your dreams. You only fail if you stop trying, everything else is a lesson.



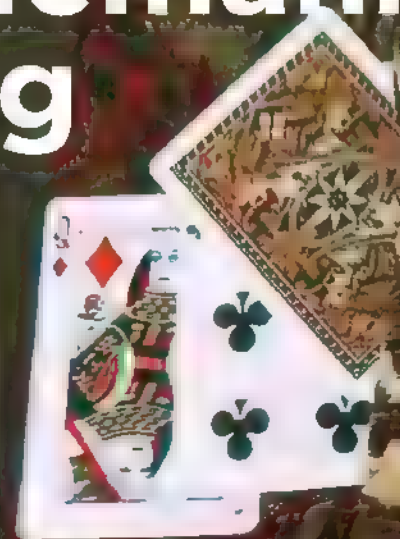


Altered Ego: Maggie Lindemann on Becoming Herself

She's a pop princess, but she's never sat right. Two years of self-reflection and one new scream-o album later, the singer talks insecurities, entitlement and big-butt envy

WRITTEN BY BEATRICE HAZLEHURST

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRANDON ARREAR



"It's scary, and it's all lies," shudders Maggie Lindemann. The singer boasts millions of followers across her social media platforms, and even owes her career to a video-sharing app, but online attention still manages to elicit anxiety. For now, her following remains ever devoted to the musician, but Lindemann is haunted by the possibility the wind could change.

Yet to evolve, she risked exactly that.

After years of putting out conventional pop music, late last month the 22-year-old released her debut EP, *Paranoia* (perhaps aptly named). A punk mod metal hybrid, the album is a major departure for the singer, a new phase in the evolution of an artist whose roots reach back nearly a decade to Keek.

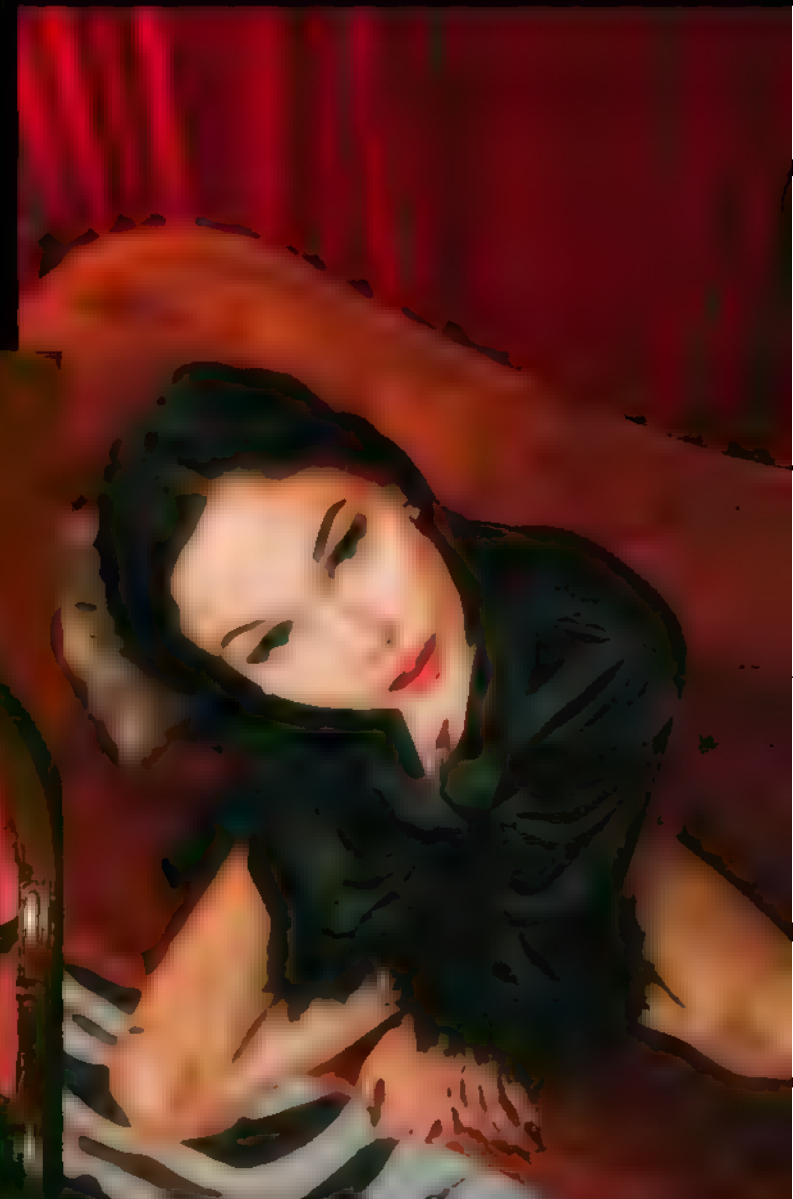
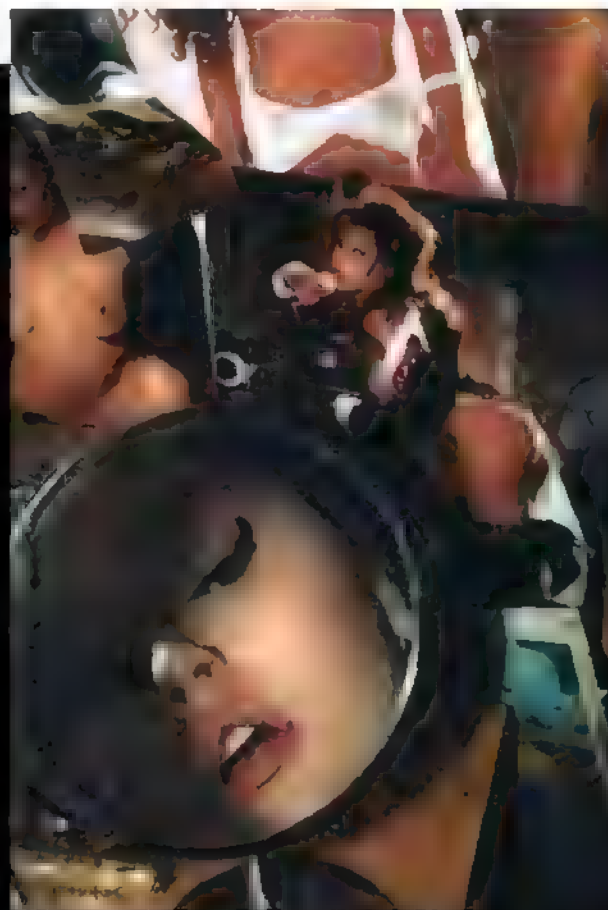
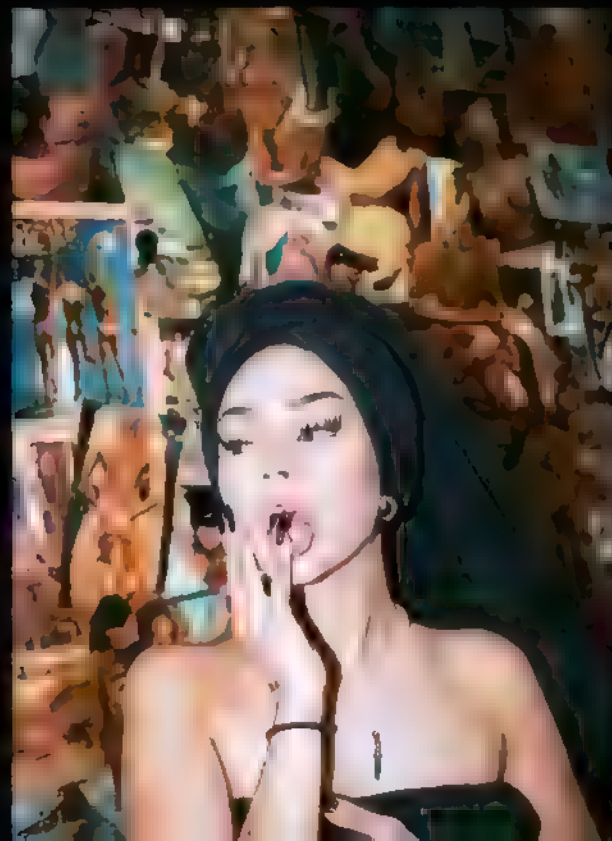
Before TikTok there was Vine, and before Vine, Keek. It was on Keek—a now defunct video-sharing app once beloved by Kylie Jenner—that a young Lindemann began building a fanbase from her silken singing snippets. It was during the Bieber era, in which execs from the music industry were vigorously scouring the internet for undiscovered talent. Lindemann, a sensation from Dallas, Texas, had already proved herself adept at filling the feeds of leagues of teens. She was just 16, and singing into a lamp, when a talent manager came calling.

Soon after, she decamped to Los Angeles to pursue her music career. Within just a few years of touching down at LAX, Lindemann found international success with the balladic "Pretty Girl," charting in Canada and the U.K., as well as breaking into the U.S. pop radio rotation. The song was immediately remixed into a radio-ready pop-bop so saccharine that many missed its acerbic message. "Don't underestimate me," Lindemann's early image as an unapologetic scene queen dissolved as the track gained mainstream attention. Seemingly overnight, she felt be-

holden to an audience built from a genre she didn't much listen to and paired with artists whose style smothered her own. She had anticipated a slow burn transition into traditional media. Now she was overheating in the spotlight.

In 2019, a new Lindemann began to emerge, one truer to her creative soul. Fresh off the success of follow-up single "Friends Go," she had traveled to Asia for performances in Malaysia, Vietnam and Singapore. Three songs into her debut set in Kuala Lumpur, she was arrested for performing without a professional permit. Jailed for a day and confined to a hotel room for four more, Lindemann described the experience as a "living hell"—one that kick-started a complete artistic rebirth.

"I'm seen as like this big, bad, cool girl—but in person, I feel I'm not at all."



Her rebellion was steady and early pointed lyrics aside—silent. She sheared her long locks short and grew her tattoo collection tenfold, her aesthetic becoming synonymous with fishnets and flannel. Musically, heavy guitar riffs and faster beats salted her sugary vocals. Blink 182 drummer Travis Barker appeared on one release, confounding some fans and prompting another to muse, “She should do punk/rock more often.”

The conventional “Pretty Girl” image was being sliced apart at the seams—and Maggie Lindemann was holding the knife.

“It was hard for me because it was this inner battle,” Lindemann tells me over Zoom. “It became about whether I wanted to be happy and have fun with what I was doing, or whether I wanted to be really successful and make money.”

Staying true to herself won out. Oscillating between screamo and emo, Paranoia recalls early tracks from Lindemann’s punk descendent heroes, Paramore. Stripped of industry gloss, with a few more layers of eyeliner, she’s become the singer she actually wants to be. In a wide-ranging conversation, Lindemann talks anxiety, privacy, human rights and why she just might go under the knife someday.

PLAYBOY: You’ve been through a huge transformation in the past two years. Walk me through the evolution of your artistic identity. What did the self-discovery process look like?

LINDEMANN: Oh my gosh. When I moved to L.A., I was only 16, and I didn’t know who I was. I had no identity. I morphed to my surroundings, just wanting to fit in. Now I’ve become the person who I feel I truly am. At first it was definitely more of a style change. Then I wanted my music to sound the way I looked, and I wanted my music to sound like what I listened to. I wanted my music to be something I actually listened to and enjoyed. Obviously when you have such a big song [like “Pretty Girl”], they just want you to stick with that because they know it works.

PLAYBOY: Was there a turning point?

LINDEMANN: It was a buildup of moments. I would perform “Pretty Girl” at my shows and it was always so unnatural. I felt uncomfortable and awkward performing it because I felt so out of touch with it. It felt like a disconnect for a really long time. I see pop artists dance and do these little moves onstage and they look so cute performing to their songs. I never saw that for myself, never saw myself as that kind of artist.

PLAYBOY: So you start exploring this new sound. Were you worried about maintaining the loyalty of your “Pretty Girl” fans?

LINDEMANN: It was really hard. I’m nervous that people won’t like the stuff I’m doing. So that was always scary for me, but I don’t know. It was something I sat on for a while, trying to figure out how to do it. I guess I have so many fans on Instagram that started following me for my style, so I felt that after a couple of years, it would work.

PLAYBOY: How much of your personal life do you share? Do you hold back?

LINDEMANN: I like to keep private. In a way it is me online, but it’s me as an artist. You’re not getting the full me. If someone said something bad about me, that would hurt way more than if someone said something bad about me, the artist. I keep as much

offline as I can because I’m very sensitive and that stuff can really hurt my feelings.

PLAYBOY: Is that difficult to navigate when your boyfriend, Brandon Arreaga, is also a public figure?

LINDEMANN: He’s a really private person too. You don’t know him at all online—he’s so different. He’s genuinely just such a sweet, kind person. There’s something about knowing someone personally that the world doesn’t know that is just really refreshing. Neither of us ever wanted to be all over social media constantly posting pictures together.

PLAYBOY: He shot the accompanying photos. What’s your dynamic on a creative level? How does shooting with him differ than with any other photographer?

LINDEMANN: Well, he just knows me, obviously, really well. We’ve been together for two years, and he knows what I like and how I like things to look. I just feel so comfortable with him, and he knows my angles and everything, and I always feel like I get such good pictures with him.

Sometimes meeting someone for the first time and then having to shoot is hard. You have to really open up because it shows on camera if you’re holding back. With him, it’s just immediate comfort, and we can jump right into it.

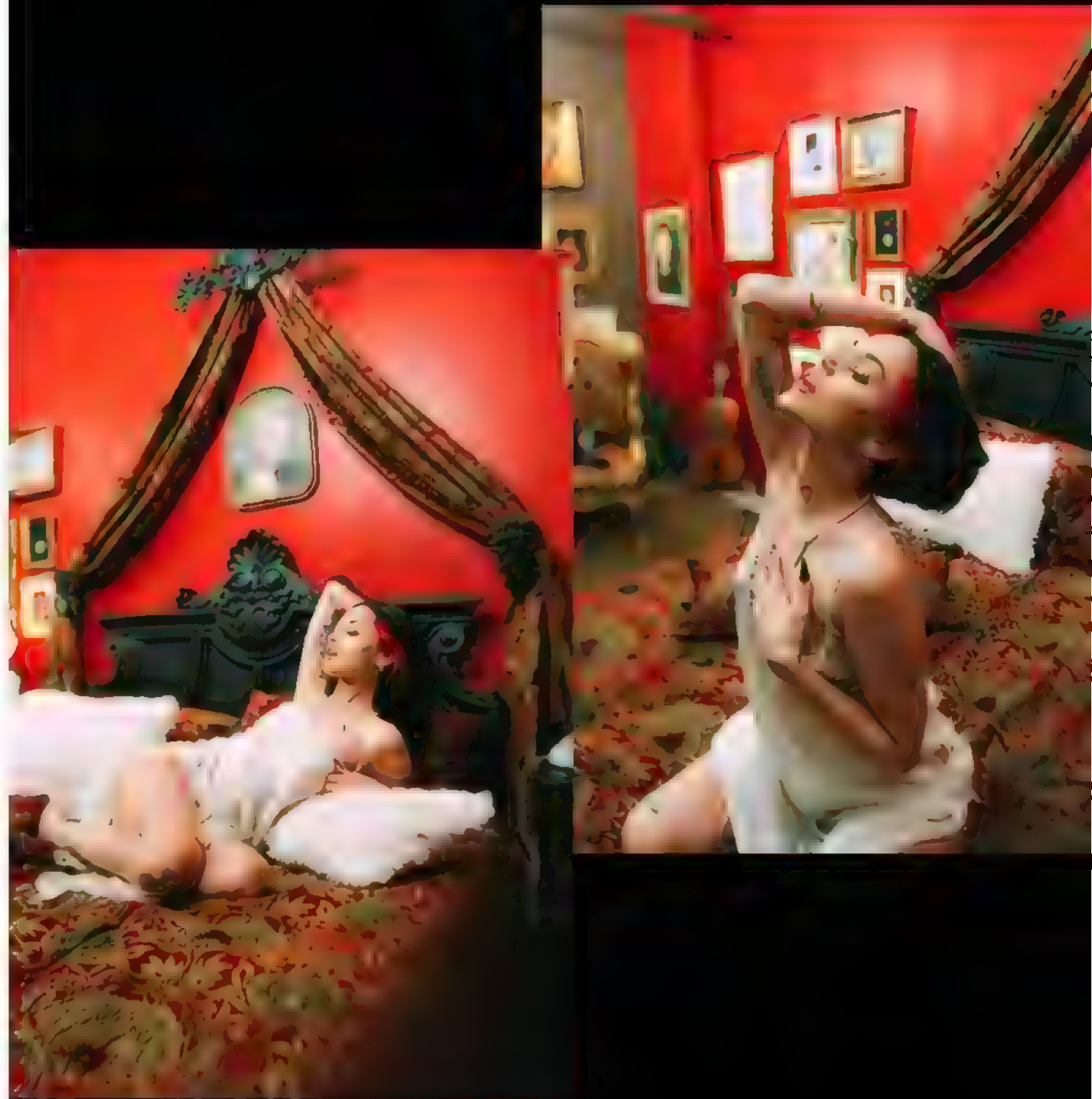
PLAYBOY: You’ve become more politically engaged recently, what compelled you to be more vocal?

LINDEMANN: I’m from Texas and grew up in a conservative Christian area—a very, very Republican place. I grew up with those views but didn’t really know what that meant at all. When I came to L.A., I just never really cared. I know that’s terrible now. I was so young that I was like, Oh, well, I can’t vote, so I don’t care.

Then four years ago, I started to find interest in politics and human rights. I do have a big platform, and I am of age to vote, and it’s just selfish of me to think that I shouldn’t care. Also just being in quarantine, and everything that’s gone on this past year, has given us so much extra time to see everything. It gave me time to reflect on everything that was going on and feel real anger about it. I felt real anger and passion for the things that I was speaking about.

PLAYBOY: One position you publicly supported is the abolition of the death penalty. Did you prepare for backlash?

LINDEMANN: I definitely didn’t think about that when I posted it. But people I grew up with commented on my post, like, “Wow, you were so much better when you lived in Texas.” Or, like, “You’re so stupid. What happened to you?” Stuff like that. I understand where they’re coming from because I used to have a lot of those same beliefs. If I feel confident about something, I’m going to speak up about it. You can have your opinion on the death penalty and I’ll have mine.



PLAYBOY: Have you noticed a difference in how you're perceived versus how you perceive yourself?

LINDEMANN: People think I'm confident and pretty hard because of how I am online. I'm not. Like I said, I'm sensitive. I'm a baby in person. I'm definitely not confident. I have my insecurities and really bad social anxiety, and I'm not really good around a lot of people. I think it's fun to come across a certain way online because I'm seen as like this big, bad, cool girl—but in person, I feel I'm not at all.

PLAYBOY: How does that affect your mental health?

LINDEMANN: I used to not let things get to me, but I think quarantine has really messed up my mental health. I don't have a lot going on in real life besides work stuff. Other than that, when the interviews are done and the shoots are done, I don't have much to do. I'm constantly just reading. The internet is so brutal, and people are so not understanding, and that sometimes really gets to me.

PLAYBOY: Is it the rumors or reviews that hit hardest?

LINDEMANN: It's actually what I see people say about other people. I'll be watching TikToks and see someone making fun of a celebrity, or I'll be reading an Instagram comment on someone else's picture, and people are so mean. It's so toxic. That gets to me. I start thinking, What if that was me? I get a lot of love, but I'm always scared that's going to end and eventually I'm going to get a lot of hate.

PLAYBOY: We're also obsessed with "honesty." Between filters and Facetune and cosmetic surgery, authenticity has become this hot commodity.

LINDEMANN: Yeah, but that's just a sense of entitlement. You're not entitled to know [what someone's had done]. I find it so ironic when people are pro-choice but demand to know what someone does with their body. It's literally none of your business. Entitlement is so out of control.

PLAYBOY: We feel entitled because our body image is affected by the images we consume.

LINDEMANN: Exactly. But if someone has a naturally big butt or a fake big butt and you don't have a butt, it doesn't matter if it's fake or real. You're still going to want that butt. So it becomes, What are you going to do to get it? You're either going to have to work out a lot or get your butt done. The idea doesn't change in your mind. It's still the same. It's messed up.

PLAYBOY: Were you ever tempted by the "Instagram ideal"? The huge butt or boobs?

LINDEMANN: I see the same stuff everyone else does. It's hard not to be attracted to the beauty standard. It's hard not to want to look like that, when that's the most popular. It's definitely been hard for me. I think, Do I need to get this? But I don't want to go through the pain of it. Maybe one day, but for now I'm not trying to be in pain. That's really the only thing that's kept me from doing it. Knowing that you can't sit on your butt for, like, two weeks? I'm thinking, Well that's not going to work.

PLAYBOY: What was it like navigating the L.A. scene when you first arrived? Has it changed?

LINDEMANN: When I first moved here, I was having the time of my life. I was 16 and lived on my own. I had so much access

"I get a lot of love,
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to the world, which was a blessing and a curse, because I was still growing up and there were so many things I didn't know. I wanted to fit in, but in L.A. there's so much materialism. I felt like I wasn't cool enough if I didn't wear a designer bag or live in a really nice place and drive a really nice car. If I didn't have those really nice things, I was looked at like I was failing. I got so caught up in it. Now I literally don't care about any of that. So much of what I cared about just doesn't matter.

PLAYBOY: Do you find that the bigger you get, the more "making it" becomes a connections game?

LINDEMANN: L.A. is funny like that. You'll meet someone and they'll invite you out, and then it's someone's house and you'll meet this person and this person. It's so funny because I used to view celebrities as so out of reach. But once you're in that world, it feels like everything opens up.

I definitely view things differently now. I used to look at celebrities like they were unreal. Like they don't feel pain and they're not sad. Now I see a little bit more of what they go through.

PLAYBOY: Are you concerned about cancel culture?

LINDEMANN: Yeah, definitely. I'm really bad with words—literally just so bad with how I word stuff, especially in front of an audience. When I'm on Instagram Live, I immediately run out of things to say and feel really awkward. Like, I'm just staring at myself. I don't like it. I worry people are going to take what I'm saying the wrong way or not understand what I'm trying to say. It's scary, and it's all lies.

PLAYBOY: How is that reflected in your songwriting?

LINDEMANN: It was therapy for me to get everything out and write it down. But also I always think, Does this sound corny? Are people going to relate? Is this word right? Sometimes when people are too real, it's able in songs. I'm like, This doesn't feel right, something's off. I just want it to feel natural.

I really liked the idea of making the older generation feel nostalgic and the younger generation feel like they have a girl singer in punk, or whatever you want to call it, to look to. It would be really cool to be part of that.





PLAYBOY





The Playboy Symposium On Race

At the start of Black History Month, Playboy convenes some of our greatest minds to discuss the ever-shifting meaning of race in the United States.

WRITTEN BY THE PLAYBOY EDITORS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RACHELLE BAKER

This is just the teetering edge of a reckoning on race in the United States.

began to quiet. Many eager tourists to Wokelandia remembered they had left the faucet running or didn't unplug the space heater and then departed as quickly as they had arrived. They returned to their regular lives, where it was safe and they didn't have to think about the problem we all live with.

But we cannot afford to lose the momentum from June. How do allies turn advocacy into lasting action? How do we turn moments into movements? We're in the afterglow of a new president and a new Congress, but hope shouldn't make our memories hazy. This is just the teetering edge of a reckoning on race in the United States. The history of our "democratic experiment" is one in which certain groups were crushed so other groups could advance. Dragging this into the light requires that white Americans stare unflinchingly into the moral abyss that forms the foundation of how America operates now.

Since 1953, Playboy has been a rich forum for ideas and a platform for thought leadership. In this Winter 2021 Playboy Symposium, titled On Race, four public thinkers share their lived realities on race. These contributors straddle a spectrum of industries and worldviews. But no matter where each of them come from, they approach the idea of race with a unique point of view. Patricia Escárcega, restaurant critic at the Los Angeles Times, examines the white gaze of American culinary culture. Leah Thomas, a sustainability activist and founder of the Intersectional Environmentalist platform, believes saving BIPOC lives and saving the planet are inextricably linked. Theologian Tricia Hersey, founder of the Nap Ministry, seeks the end of white capitalism through rest. Finally, Dr. Leana Wen, an emergency room physician and former health commissioner for Baltimore, asks us to see racism itself, in addition to Covid-19, as a public health crisis.

From the food we eat to the air we breathe to how we rest and heal, these essays explore how race permeates everything we do. This symposium isn't meant to be a blueprint for anti-racism, but rather a beginning. These sharp minds issue a call to action for anyone who claims to be against the status quo, where racism and inequality flourish. Progress will depend on our willingness to abandon it.

"Don't make it about race." It's a common gaslighting refrain when any person of color dares to point out the myriad ways in which this world was designed to perpetuate harm against them. The truth is, everything is about race. If you don't think so, it's because you haven't been looking. And if you haven't been looking, it's because you've had the privilege of turning away.

After the massive Black Lives Matter demonstrations of the past summer, after the flood of black squares on social media feeds and after the rush of organizations to diversify executive boards and candidate pools, the din



CANDICE KLOSS

Instagram @candicekloss

Photography by Allan Fredrick
PR LA Media Group | @la.mediagroup







Such an absolute honor to have you on Playboy!
What are the plans this year for you? Thank you! I'm so grateful for the opportunity. This is the first full year of my living in NYC. I'm always very busy with photoshoots and collaborations, but this year I have time to explore more of the city.

What is at the top of your list to achieve the most in the year 2022? Take a long snowboarding trip in the US or Europe, and go out to eat more!

What does it mean for you to be seen as a strong, intelligent, ambitious woman? I'm glad I can be a positive influence on others. These qualities look different in everyone, but I think what they all have in common is that successful women live according to their values, even if sometimes this is against what's popular.

What would you say makes you stand out in the industry? Probably my Brazilian and Japanese background, or my height! I'm 5' tall.

Where are we most likely to find you if not in front of the camera being glamorous? Before COVID I was constantly traveling and have been on a few trips since then. I'm still not used to being home so much but get to spend my free time with friends and family and recently started learning golf.

What are some of your biggest passions? Travel and business.

3 ultimate deal-breakers when it comes to men? High strung, bad etiquette, or bad breath!

What are some of the things that attract you to a man? Confidence, intelligence, and a good sense of humor!

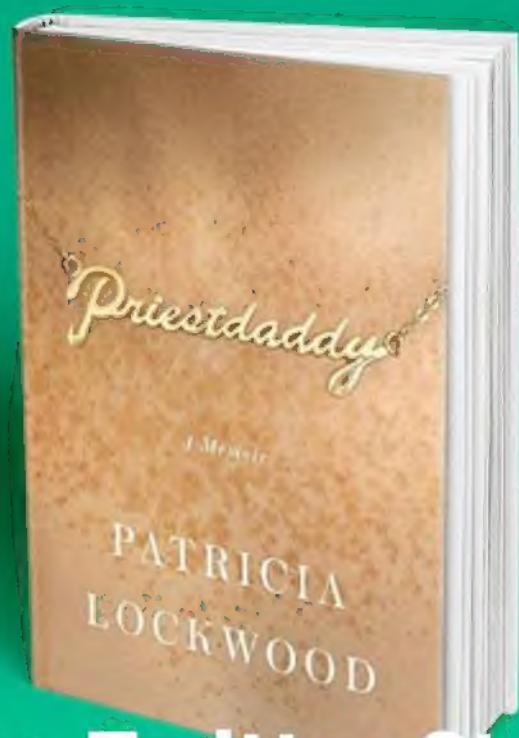
Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years? I think I'll always have a place in NYC, but I may check out some different places to live. Wherever it is, I plan to be busy making great content, managing my other businesses, and traveling the world!

What is the wrong way to approach you as an admirer? I don't have a ton of time for dating, but when I do I notice little etiquette details like whether someone pulls out a chair or opens a door.

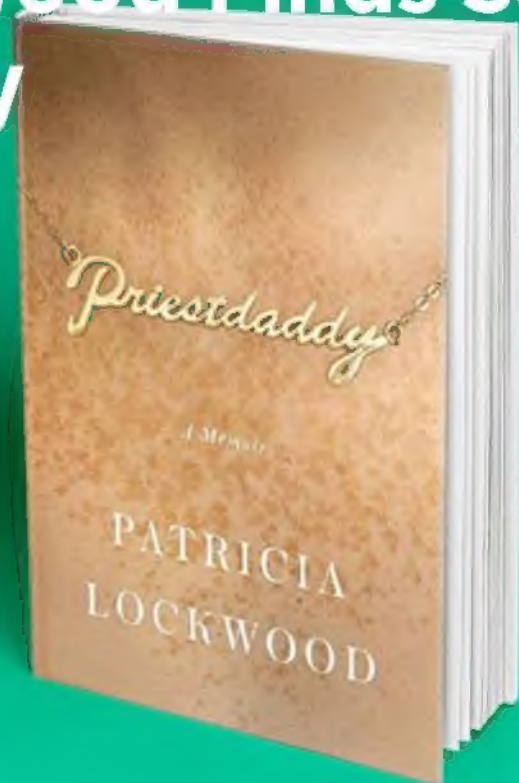
Where can our readers catch up with you and stay updated with your work? You can catch up with me on my Instagram. I'm also on Twitter and chat with my fans on my membership site.

We are so happy to have gotten to know you a little bit! Any last words out there for our readers? Thank you so much for having me, and to all the readers for getting to know me.

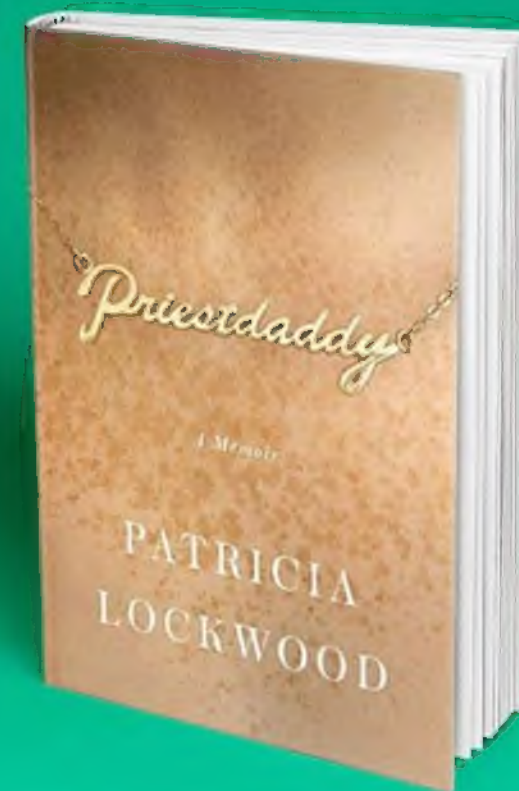
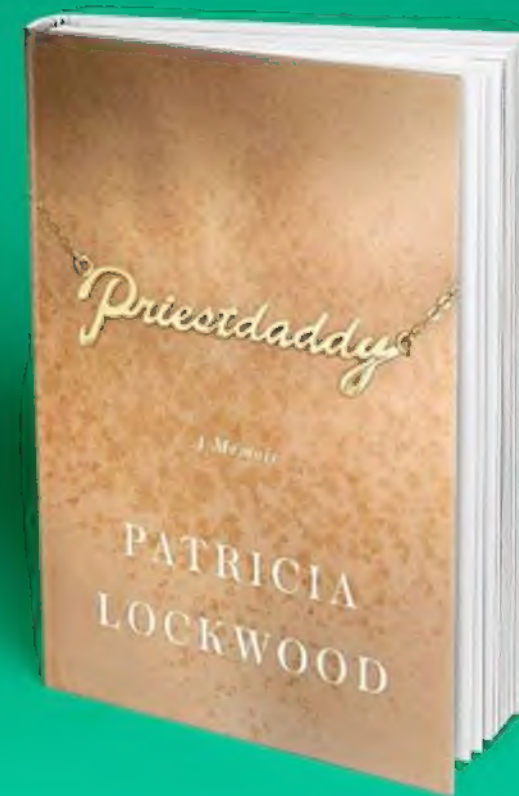




Sexting Twitter Star Patricia Lockwood Finds Salvation in Poetry



On the release of her first memoir, *Priestdaddy*, the writer and “Twitter poet laureate” talks about her Catholic upbringing and how it shaped—and warped—her creative personality



BY JAMES YEH

"I'm a naturally reverent person.... You don't become a poet unless that's true of you."

Patricia Lockwood's new memoir *Priestdaddy* sounds as if it could be equal parts bad joke and worse porno: What do you get when you bring together a Catholic priest, his wife and their daughter, a gifted, dirty-minded poet? You get a powerful true story from one of America's most relevant and funniest writers. Lockwood's humor—conversational, sensitive, mordant—serves as her work's bedrock and signature. It was a "joke," after all, that catapulted Lockwood to wide recognition: Her "Rape Joke," one of the most devastating poems of the 21st century, was published online in 2013 and quickly went viral, vaulting her into the cultural consciousness.

With two poetry collections under her belt (*Balloon Pop* and *Outlaw and Motherland Fatherland Homelandsexuals*), *Priestdaddy* is Lockwood's first foray into memoir. Her career to date is hardly traditional. Often described as "Twitter's poet laureate," the Fort Wayne, Indiana, native has long embraced the internet as a medium. Recent tweets to her 64,000 followers address everything from horse buttocks to Dat Boi to her Bieber-face dress. So it's no surprise that the commandingly written *Priestdaddy*—about family, religion, identity and trauma—will certainly make you laugh out loud. But it may also move you to tears.

Filled with boundless—and boundary-less—energy and sex jokes, *Priestdaddy* centers on Lockwood's return with her husband Jason to live in her parents' rectory in Kansas City, Missouri, broke and wiped out after having to pay for unexpected eye surgeries for Jason. Adjusting to cohabitation with Lockwood's mother Karen (a perpetually worrying Perfect Mom) and father Greg (the scenery-chewing priest daddy of the title) provides for a fusillade of anecdotes, as does the family's Catholicism. Greg, a guitar-soloing, Rush Limbaugh-listening seaman-cum-clergyman, was already a married dad when he became a Catholic priest, ordained via technicality; his favorite pastimes appear to be speaking in all caps, buying fancy musical instruments and lounging around near-nude.

Lockwood's ability to mash up church, smut and poesy into conversational, contemporary prose is remarkable. Whether it's memorable phrasings such as "cucked by God" or an entertaining if somewhat slight chapter about finding semen in a hotel room with her mother—"a thousand cums crying out for a body," "a Catholic's worst nightmare: souls all over the bed"—there's an infectious joy and delirium to her inventive turns of phrase, her supremely filthied-out lyricism.

"I'm a naturally reverent person," Lockwood tells me. "A

lot of people would laugh if I said that to them, but you don't become a poet unless that's true of you. But I'm also interested in seeing all that I can do with it. To me, it's a lot funnier coming out of my mom's mouth than it would be, like, Bob Saget's.

"He followed me on Twitter at one point," she explains. "I took a screenshot and then was like, 'Well, this is weird.' It's one of those things—years after you watched *Full House*, Bob Saget follows you on Twitter—we're in a weird age."

Beneath *Priestdaddy*'s juxtapositions of jizz and religiosity, the extended comic set pieces and occasional "toy observation," Lockwood's deeper project is one about survival: the story of how writing helped her deal with trauma, first as a suicidal 16-year-old chorus student and later as 19-year-old sexual assault victim (see "Rape Joke").

"A trick I often use when I feel overwhelming shame or regret or brokenness beyond repair," Lockwood writes in *Priestdaddy*, "is to think of a line I especially love, or a poem that arrived like lightning, and remember that it wouldn't have come to me if anything in my life had happened differently. Not that way. Not in those words." Considerations like these—about the different forces that shape a narrative, and a life—permeate the book. "The story of family is always a story of complicity," she writes. These declarations—direct, solemn, juddering—are part of the literary machinery of the book, directing it past the rollicking, internetty lols about bodily fluids into darker, near-unpunch-line-able realms where Lockwood is, in many ways, most effective.

PLAYBOY: What was going on in your life when you first started writing *Priestdaddy*?

LOCKWOOD: I started writing it in the upstairs room of the rectory, a few weeks after we moved back in with my parents—just out of a desire to create a quiet, clear-thinking circle in the chaos of that household. Real calm was impossible there, though. If you read carefully, you can hear



the faint sounds of the electric guitar wailing between the lines, like background music on NPR.

PLAYBOY: As a creator, what was the biggest challenge for you in switching genres, from poetry to memoir?

LOCKWOOD: It's possible to write a poem that contains almost no information, but in a memoir you're always having to say what year it is, and what everyone's pants looked like, and why it all happened the way it did. Poetry, in its best moments, arrives like a visitation. But in memoir you have to set out in search of something, one foot in front of another for miles and miles and miles. You are in search of the real story, I suppose, but it does not come to you. You have to go looking for it.

PLAYBOY: You have this great line in *Priestdaddy*: "Scratch the most debauched writer on the planet...and find a person who was raised in the Catholic church." That's quite a provocative statement.

I honestly think that's one of the truest things in there.

PLAYBOY: What is it in particular about the Catholic church, do you think, that nurtures debauchery and writerliness?

LOCKWOOD: We have a lot of excellent writers. That part of it is that we take very much pride in a long academic and philosophical tradition. But Catholic schools—they're pretty good schools. The nuns, they ride you hard about that.

As for the debauchery, we focus as Catholics so much on the body and what you're not supposed to do with it, and all the potentially wrong things you might do with it. You hear about Christians receiving this terrible, limited sex education where you don't know how many holes you have. Catholics are like, "Oh no, we're going to tell you how many fucking holes you have." You know, they were so specific about the body and its dangers and its pitfalls.

And a lot of it has got to be the confession thing; it has to be. We have to specifically go each week into a tiny, sexy room—let's be real—and there's some guy over there on the other side of a screen. And a lot of times, let's face it, sins are sex things. You're like, "Oh, wow, Father, I'm masturbating all the time..." Isn't that a porno situation? Are we supposed to say in a different way, like, "Oh, Father, I've had impure thoughts." Of course, it's a nation of perverts. There's no other option, basically.

PLAYBOY: That's amazing.

LOCKWOOD: It's true! Think about it. And people are always like, "Did you go to your own father for confession?" You can't confess to your own dad.

PLAYBOY: You can only confess to the Dad.

LOCKWOOD: Exactly. You go and you pretend another priest is your father. The dynamic is torturous. And then they punish you! It's like a fetish thing, come on. I'm not even trying to be specifically provocative. You look at these things—guys, I think the answer is pretty obvious.

PLAYBOY: Who were your literary influences in writing the book?

LOCKWOOD: Oh, man. For that first eight months of writing, my entire library was in storage. I had five physical books with me: *The Fountain Overflows*, by Rebecca West; *Out of Africa*, by Isak Dinesen; *The Possessed*, by Elif Batuman; *Open City*, by Teju Cole, and *The Selected Letters of Dawn Powell*. The only other books in the household were about, like, tears turning into blood at out-of-the-way French shrines, or why none of the popes since the Second Vatican Council counted as real. That's what I had! So the initial tone of the book felt very unconnected to all that reading I had done in my

"I just want to give people a week's rest from staring directly into the B-hole of the apocalypse."

previous life, very unconnected to literature as a whole and the people who had influenced me in my writing before. It felt like a one-off, though of course there's no such thing.

PLAYBOY: You write, near the end: "Part of what you have to figure out in this life is, Who would I be if I hadn't been frightened?" Did you ever come up with an answer to this question?

LOCKWOOD: Perhaps if I had had a better imagination about what is possible in a personality and what is possible in a life, I wouldn't have felt as frightened in the first place, as cowed by the winds of authority loose in the world. I do not feel as brave as I wish to be, no. But all you can do in that circumstance, all anyone can do, is to live as if you are.

PLAYBOY: The New York Times once declared you the "smutty-metaphor queen of Lawrence, Kansas." How would you describe yourself?

LOCKWOOD: Heaven's Clown! Call me Heaven's Clown. But no, you must never allow me to describe myself, or attempt to give myself a nickname. For about a week after I sold *Priestdaddy*, I tried to get people to call me *Princesse Book Deale*, but nobody went for it.

PLAYBOY: What do you hope people take away from reading your memoir?

LOCKWOOD: There was a time I might have answered this question more high-mindedly, but right now? I just want to give people a week's rest from staring directly into the B-hole of the apocalypse.

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